

THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Sunshine, but cooler everywhere

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MEDIA+

WHY HANK HILL
IS NOT AS HELL

WITH PAGES OF APPOINTMENTS

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THE LITTLE
GIRL INSIDE
BILLIE

23 PAGE SPORT PULL-OUT

SHEAREN
KEEPS ENJOYING
HAPPY

Left sweeps to power in France

John Lichfield
Paris

The Left won a comfortable victory in the French parliamentary elections last night, plunging the country into another period of power-sharing and threatening to de-rail plans for a single European currency.

In a stunning repudiation of President Jacques Chirac, with five years of his term still to run, French voters looked likely to give a clear majority of seats to the National Assembly to the Socialists, Communists and allies. It even seemed likely that the Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, would command a small majority of his own party. Either way, the next French government is likely to include several Communist ministers, making France the only country in Europe where avowed Communists hold a share of power.

The first computer projections of the result gave 296 seats to Socialists and allies, 35 to the Communists, 242 to the centre right and two to the far-right National Front. A total of 289 seats is needed for a majority.

The result was, above all, a humiliation for President Chirac, who called the election nine months early in the hope of winning tactical surprise for the governing centre-right coalition of his own RPR (Gaullist) party and the UDF alliance of small right and centre parties. In the event, it was the centre-right which entered the second round of the elections yesterday in near-total disarray, without a prime ministerial candidate or a coherent set of policies to put before the electorate.

The Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, who played an important role in persuading President Chirac to call the early poll, had already said that he intended to stand down following the unexpectedly strong performance of the Left in the first round a week ago. The centre-right parties hoped Mr Juppé's decision would bring many disgruntled middle-class voters, who abstained last week, back to the polling booths. The turn-out did increase sharply yesterday but as many of the extra voters seemed to have turned to the left, as to the right. Although the decision rests formally with President Chirac, it seems certain that Mr Juppé's successor as Prime Minister will be the Socialist leader, Mr Jospin, 59.

A former university professor and minister for education, his position as Socialist leader had seemed under threat earlier this year. He made a lacklustre opposition leader. But - as in 1995, when he was narrowly defeated for the Presidency by Mr Chirac - he ran a vigorous and competent campaign.

He owes yesterday's success mostly to two factors outside his control. The first was the great unpopularity of Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé, who failed to deliver on the campaign promises of 1995 to attack unemployment and heal "social fracture". Mr Juppé ran a confused campaign, culminating in his unprecedented withdrawal between rounds.

The second factor helping the Left was the continuing rise of the far-right National Front, which was able to maintain candidates in over 100 constituencies yesterday, splitting

the right-wing vote. Despite its record 15 per cent score in the first round, however, the first computer projections last night suggested that the NF would win no more than two seats.

Under the constitution of the Fifth Republic, Mr Chirac can remain in power as President until 2002. Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, last night called for President Chirac to resign, but he is unlikely to do so. Backed by a parliamentary majority of his own supporters, the President is the supreme figure in French politics. With a majority belonging to the opposition - as happened twice to President Mitterrand - the balance of power swings to the Prime Minister.

Mr Jospin campaigned to make the short-term battle against unemployment - running at 12.8 per cent - the centrepiece of government policy. In particular, he said he would insist on a softer interpretation of the fiscal and budgetary guidelines for membership of the European single currency. Such a reopening of the negotiations could force EU governments to abandon the single currency altogether. On the other hand, it could provide cover for EU states to reconsider and delay Economic and Monetary Union for several years.

It may fall to one of the godparents of Emu to try to sort out the mess. It has been rumoured in recent days that Mr Jospin would appoint the former European Commission President, Jacques Delors, as foreign minister or minister for Europe. France turns to Jospin, page 8



Renaissance: The field in France's other big race yesterday, the Prix du Jockey Club, passing the Grand Ecurie at Chantilly - stables built by the Comte de Condé, who wished to be reincarnated as a horse. Race report, Sport tabloid, page 16 Photograph: Allsport

Blair vows to end culture of dependency

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Tony Blair will today dedicate his government to helping the "forgotten people": the millions trapped on benefit with no help and no hope of getting into training or work.

In his first non-parliamentary statement of government philosophy, he will this afternoon go to a rundown south London housing estate to say: "The poorest people in our country have been the forgotten people."

"They have been left out of growing prosperity, told they were not needed, ignored by the Government except for the purpose of hating them."

"There will be no forgotten people in the Britain I want to build. When I talk about One Nation, I mean everyone enjoying the chance to get on."

Mr Blair's speech will focus on his determination to help the "workless class", the 4.5 million people of working age who live in homes without work: the million or more who have not worked since they left school.

But the Prime Minister's face said there was no question, in helping the 90 per cent of single mothers who wanted to get into work, of compulsion or a "tough line" as reported in one newspaper yesterday. One source said the idea that a gun was to be put to the heads of single mothers was nonsense.

Since 1979, when Margaret Thatcher took office, social security spending has increased fivefold, and while there are 150,000 homeless people, housing expenditure has shifted from a housing investment programme of £7bn in 1979, to a housing benefit bill of £11bn today.

"Governments lock people into dependence rather than give them the means to be independent," Mr Blair will say. "They can give out money, not because it's the right thing to do but the easy thing to do..."

"A large minority of the population now forms a workless class, cut off from jobs and careers and fatalistic about the future."

"It is economically and morally unsustainable: economically, because it loads huge costs on to the taxpayer; morally, because we should always judge the state of any country by the condition of the weak as well as the strong."

Mr Blair will argue that the system works all too often against the people it is meant to be helping. The test should be: does the system give back to people the chance to win - or does it trap them on benefit for the most productive years of their lives?

But Mr Blair's appeal also carries an explicit warning for the strong: that the policies required to heal society and create one nation - and remember the "forgotten people" - will not be without cost or sacrifice.

The Prime Minister says: "The 1960s were about the state, the 1980s were about the individual, the late 1990s and the early part of the next century will be about community."

That meant that while the Sixties had been a decade of "anything goes", and the Eighties had been a decade of "who cares?" the Blair years would be about urging people to play an active part in society and accepting their responsibilities in full.

Mr Blair will say that he will pursue Labour policies on raising school standards; cutting NHS red tape to spend more on frontline health care; enacting pledges on crime; releasing housing receipts to build homes; and spending lottery money on health and education - including a programme to open up schools for after-hours programmes, so that children could be usefully engaged while their parents were at work. Single mothers speak, page 3

Polly Toynbee, page 15

New sleaze row knocks at door of No 10

Anthony Bevins

Downing Street yesterday reacted angrily to an accusation that the Prime Minister was threatening to create a new "sleaze" culture at the heart of Whitehall.

The attack follows widespread media speculation that Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff at No 10, was to be appointed to the post of Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary. Those reports have startled Whitehall insiders, and Peter Hennessy, Professor

of Contemporary History at the University of London, told *The Independent*: "You could almost say it was sleazy. Why does he need this bauble?"

But a senior No 10 source said last night that Mr Powell had been appointed chief of staff and would remain in that job. When Alex Allan, the current Principal Private Secretary, moves to another posting later this year, he will be replaced by another civil servant.

A Downing Street spokesman said: "Whoever is winding up Mr Hennessy, he would do

well to check his facts before making ridiculous statements." Although Mr Powell is a former diplomat, he was recruited to head Mr Blair's office as Leader of the Opposition and his transfer to Downing Street is a political appointment.

But Ann Taylor, Leader of the Commons, told BBC television's *On the Record*: "Some of the things that the Principal Private Secretary used to do in the past... are going to be done by somebody else, and the political side will go through Jonathan Powell."

Professor Hennessy was concerned that the Principal Private Secretary's role was that of "junior boss" for the civil service, involving a number of sensitive issues like security and intelligence, relations with Buckingham Palace, and honours. But *The Independent* has been told that those functions will be covered by the Prime Minister's other private secretaries, all of whom would come from within the civil service.

Clearly disturbed by the suggestion that Mr Powell might take on that role, Professor

Hennessy said Mr Blair had promised to take action against quangos and the patronage state. "Yet what he is proposing means that working within some feet of him, at Number 10, he will have created his own version of the patronage state."

The intensely political nature of the new government appears to be caught some of Whitehall's mandarins by surprise. But having spent so many years in the political wilderness, many of them observing Baroness Thatcher's hardline political style, Mr Blair and Labour's most senior min-

isters are not in a mood for half measures.

Mr Blair is expected to give a written Commons reply on the numbers of political appointments to Whitehall posts this week, including 14 appointments to the No 10 Policy Unit.

But the point was being made last night that while numbers of political appointees might have risen, the pay bill would be roughly the same as it had been for Tory government political appointments.

Labour and civil service, page 5
Leading article, page 14

Clinton would testify, but not show his body

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

In the latest remarkable episode of the continuing soap opera that is the Clinton presidency, Bill Clinton's lawyer said yesterday that his client would not apologise to Paula Jones for alleged sexual harassment. Mr Clinton, he said, was prepared to go to court - but not take off his clothes - to defend himself.

A lawyer for Ms Jones confirmed that copies of an affidavit

she had signed describing what she says are "distinguishing characteristics" of the President's "genital area", had been stored in different locations for safekeeping. Mr Clinton's lawyer, Robert Bennett, said that he would not allow his client to be "humiliated" by a medical examination.

As if this were not enough, there was also a report that Jennifer Flowers, the woman named during the 1992 presidential election campaign as Mr

Clinton's long-time mistress, had offered to testify on behalf of Ms Jones.

Ms Jones's charge is that Mr Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, made unwanted sexual advances to her at a hotel in the state capital, Little Rock, six years ago. Yesterday's ruling of the stakes followed last week's decision by the Supreme Court to reject Mr Clinton's plea for the case to be delayed until he had left office.

The statements were made by

lawyers for the two parties on yesterday's television talkshows. Mr Bennett, for the President, said there were three conditions for any settlement. "One, the President of the United States will not apologise for something he never did. Two, he will not admit to conduct that did not occur for the sake of getting this behind him, and three, any resolution would have to be one that did not allow the interpretation that he must have done what is alleged in the complaint." However, he

stopped short of excluding a financial settlement.

Joseph Cammarata, for Ms Jones, was coy about whether the restoration of her good name was all that his client was seeking, or whether she now required a financial settlement as well. He said that to charges that she had been a willing participant in whatever went on in Little Rock were now added the accusation that she had lied about it. Any settlement, he intimated, would have to be very substantial indeed.



Paula Jones: Any deal would have to be 'substantial'

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Ulster peace setback
The killing of a policeman by loyalists and an IRA attempt to renew its bombing campaign have provided severe setbacks to hopes of progress in a renewed Irish peace process.

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Bailiffs evict 13 runaway protesters from tree house

Bailiffs at the site of Manchester Airport's second runway yesterday evicted 13 people from a giant tree house at one of the camps set up by environmental protesters. The 10 men and three women were plucked from the four-storey tree house known as Battleground, at Flywood, the largest of six camps. Another man, who had been in a tunnel at River Rat camp, left voluntarily.

All were arrested for obstruction and bailed. One man was arrested for breaking bail conditions of not re-entering the runway site, in the Boffin Valley, near Sneyd, Cheshire. Police said that yesterday's evictions brought the total to 114 since the operation began a fortnight ago.

Twelve people are believed to remain holed up in the complex network of tunnels at Flywood camp, while 20 to 30 are thought to be in the trees at Flywood and River Rat. Police expect the evictions to be largely completed this week. **Kathy Marks**

Tories' £30m NHS consultancy bill

The Conservatives put £30m of National Health Service money into consultants' pockets, without getting a single hospital bed out of the deal, Alan Milburn, the Minister of Health, said yesterday. New legislation, the NHS (Private Finance) Bill, is to be given its second reading in the House of Lords tomorrow, removing obstacles to the completion of Private Finance Initiative schemes.

But Mr Milburn gave the legislation an additional push yesterday when he revealed that the last government had spent £30m on PFI consultancy fees, without one major hospital contract being secured. He was particularly critical of the fact that NHS trusts were forced to spend precious resources on expensive external advice, which could have been provided centrally – and much more cheaply – by the Department of Health.

Mr Milburn said: "The Tories' mishandling of PFI in the National Health Service has cost a small fortune. Not one major hospital has been built through PFI, yet taxpayers have had to foot a vast consultancy bill. The Government is committed to making PFI work so that new hospitals get built. By cutting PFI red tape, we will get health service cash spent on patient services, not on exorbitant advisers' fees."

Anthony Bevins

Bad weather delays Bullimore



The yachtsman Tony Bullimore (left) yesterday faced a last-minute delay in starting his first race since escaping from the freezing waters of the Southern Ocean five months ago. After learning that the round-Europe race will not start before 11am today due to bad weather, he spoke of his disappointment at not being given a chance to take "advantage" of the stormy winds. Mr Bullimore, who was rescued from the upturned hull of his boat by the Australian Navy in January after surviving against the odds in freezing water, will skipper a six-strong crew. His boat is named the *Exide Challenger*, after the boat he lost.

Mixed reaction to 'Reservoir Dogs'

Equal numbers of viewers praised and complained about Channel 4's screening of Quentin Tarantino's controversial film *Reservoir Dogs*. About 30 people phoned in to protest at the level of violence and bad language contained in the uncut film, which received its first screening on British television at 10.40pm on Saturday night. But another 30 viewers phoned to say it had been "good" that the film had been shown. "The numbers for and against seem to have been split down the middle," said Barrie Hall, press officer for Channel 4. "The number of complaints are quite light considering the nature of the film." It seems that signposting for it let people avoid it or tune into it.

Police study hammer attack link

Detectives investigating the murders of Lin and Megan Russell are studying details of a hammer attack on a woman yesterday in similar circumstances. Police have said it is too early to say if there are any links but information about the attack has been passed to the incident room investigating the murders. The married woman, in her forties, was walking along a country lane from her home in Cliffe Woods, near Rochester, Kent, to a nearby farm shop this morning when she was attacked by a man wielding a hammer. He grabbed her from behind but the woman fought him off and he fled the scene near Mockbeggar Farm, Cliffe Woods. The woman was uninjured and raised the alarm at a nearby house. Lin Russell, 42, and her six-year-old daughter Megan were killed in a hammer attack as they walked home, with older daughter Josie, along a quiet country lane on 9 July last year in woods at Childen, near Canterbury, Kent. Josie nine, survived the attack.

Five share lottery jackpot

Five ticketholders shared Saturday's £7.2m National Lottery jackpot, with each winning £1,448,508, the organiser Camelot said. The winning numbers were 2, 5, 9, 28, 29 and 45. Bonus ball was 49.

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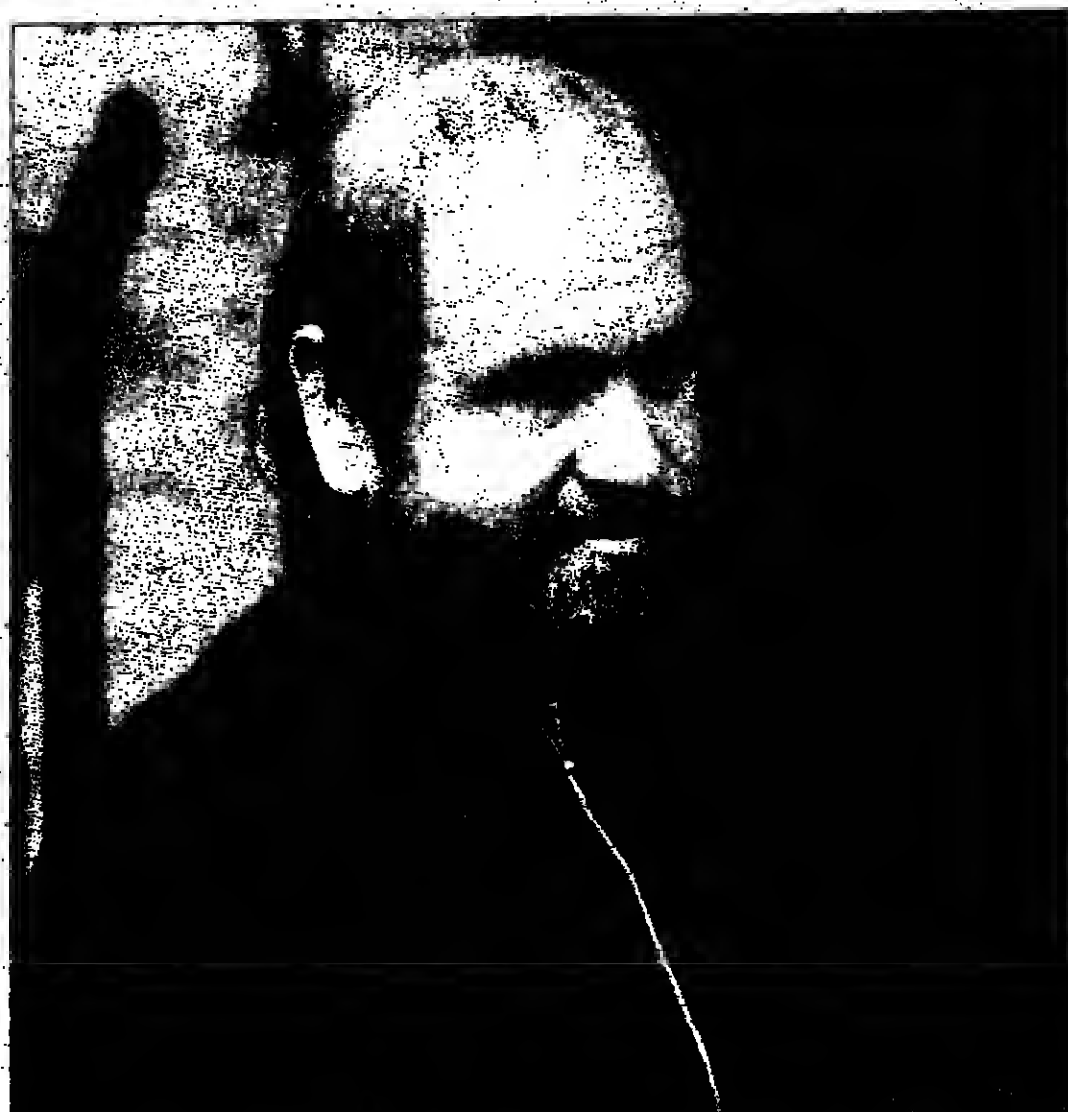
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BACK ISSUES

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people



The disgraced Gerd Reinke back in Berlin yesterday (Photograph: Reuter)

German's Hitler joke strikes the wrong note in Israel

Gerd Reinke thought a false autograph on the bill at his hotel bar would make a hilarious joke. Unfortunately for Mr Reinke, a double bass player on tour with the German Opera in Israel, singing Adolf Hitler did not go down too well with his hosts.

Not only has he now been sacked and sent home in disgrace to Berlin, but his actions have managed to undo years of painstaking work by his country's diplomats.

German officials, who helped organise the Opera's third tour of Israel, were unable to contain their frustration. "One drunken hooligan has wiped out 10 years of work," commented a member of the embassy.

It was on Friday night that Mr Reinke signed himself as the Nazi leader "for a laugh" and informed the waiter: "Adolf Hitler will pay you." "It's a joke," he hastened to add.

By the following evening a crowd of unamused Holocaust survivors were demonstrating against the company in Tel Aviv where the orchestra was due to be playing. That night's performance of *The Magic Flute* opened with a public reading of a letter of apology hurriedly dispatched from Berlin by the director, Götz Friedrich.

A representative of the orchestra also took the stage and said the players no longer regarded Mr Reinke as their friend and colleague and agreed he should be dismissed. Mr Friedrich flew to Israel yesterday to pick up the pieces, and Mr Reinke flew home on the return flight. After his arrival in Berlin, the dissonant musician took a taxi to a secret location.

"I drank too much alcohol, and was not aware what I was saying," he said by way of an apology. Staff at the hotel in Herzliya, just north of Tel Aviv, said he had consumed less than two pints of beer.

One of the demonstrators in Tel Aviv said: "I felt embarrassed, angry. What are you able to feel when you hear something like this. Even after 50 years people will not learn, they'll never learn, this hate will never pass."

Imre Karacs

Malcolm X widow critical after suspect blaze

Betty Shabazz, the widow of the black nationalist leader Malcolm X, was badly burned over most of her body in a suspicious early morning fire yesterday.

Ms Shabazz suffered third-degree burns over 80 per cent of her body, said police.

She was listed in critical condition at Jacobi Hospital in the New York borough of the Bronx, said a nursing supervisor, Pat Strauss. "It does not look good for her," a police spokesman, Detective Sergeant William Rinaldi, said.

Her apartment was not destroyed by the fire, "just the areas surrounding her", Det Sgt Rinaldi said. Police were investigating the fire as a crime.

He wouldn't comment on whether anyone else was in the apartment at the time of the fire.

Malcolm X was the voice of Black Muslims in America during the early 1960s. His raw talk about race jolted Americans, and his black nationalist appeal contrasted with the growing and integrated civil rights movement.

He was assassinated in Febru-



ary 1965. For 30 years, there was a rift between Ms Shabazz and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, whom Shabazz believed had played a role in her husband's death.

The two publicly reconciled in 1995.

Malcolm X criticised Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad shortly before his death and was labeled a traitor by Mr Farrakhan.

Goldsmith in fight against cancer

Sir James Goldsmith is fighting a secret battle against cancer, friends confirmed today.

The billionaire leader of the Referendum Party is seriously ill after being admitted to a hospital outside Paris, according to reports.

Sir James, 64, is suffering from pancreatic cancer, which first appeared in 1993 but has now returned.

A friend said: "It is true, Sir James has pancreatic cancer. His family are taking stock of the situation and are helping him battle it."

Sir James has only told a small circle of relatives and friends about the illness, which forced him to make contingency plans during the general election campaign in case his condition deteriorated before polling day.

His daughter Jemima is believed to have visited him in hospital on her way to join her husband Imran Khan in Pakistan, where the former cricketer runs a cancer hospital for the poor.

The Prince of Wales and Diana, Princess of Wales, both friends of the family, are understood to have been kept informed of Sir James's progress.

briefing

HEALTH

Lung diseases claim lives of one in five Britons

Lung diseases claim the lives of one in five people in the UK each year, figures published today reveal.

The British Lung Foundation has added together death rates for every respiratory condition, including asthma, pneumonia, tuberculosis, emphysema, bronchitis and lung cancer, and the figures show the diseases cause 20.7 per cent of deaths.

Lung cancer kills 40,000 people each year and accounted for 5.8 per cent of all deaths in the UK.

Lower respiratory tract infections, such as pneumonia and flu, kill 50,000 people and are one of the most common reasons for lost work days. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease – a combination of chronic bronchitis and emphysema – causes 30,000 deaths.

The figures were released to mark Breathe Easy Week, which the charity hopes will raise awareness of lung disease.

HOUSING

Better housing could save millions

Greater investment in better-quality housing could save millions on health, law and order and education, a report said.

The study claimed that in addition to harming residents, poor housing also has added cost for the police, schools and other public service providers.

It found that on two poor estates in Stepney, east London, the cost of dealing with crime was £325 per household per year, while the annual average cost of ill-health was more than £500.

The report, for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) by Sussex University, said there were 375,000 unfit homes in the public sector in England. If the same costs were applied to every one of these properties, that would total more than £300m.

The researchers also talked to residents of an improved estate in Paddington, west London. They found the incidence of illness was seven times higher in the Stepney estates, and 60 per cent of the cases were reported to be "very closely related" to people's housing.



SOCIETY

How lessons on life can cut crime

Parenting classes for teenagers, a clampdown on bullying and truancy, and pre-school education could help divert young people away from crime, a report by a left-wing think-tank suggests today.

The study, *Turning the Tide*, calls for greater measures and resources to prevent crime, particularly by young men, rather than dealing with offences after they have been committed.

The Demos report argues that research shows prevention does work and suggests greater use of volunteer "community wardens" to help patrol problem areas.

Jon Bright, director of field operations at Crime Concern, highlights the use of civic guards in the Netherlands as an example of how the new scheme could work.

The report says that crime costs central and local government an estimated £16.7bn a year and that one in three men are convicted of an offence by the time they are 40.

Jason Bennetto
Turning the Tide; £12.95; Demos - 0171 3534479.

SPENDING

One nation under a groove

Britons still love to play long-playing records even though most Europeans have packed away their turntables.

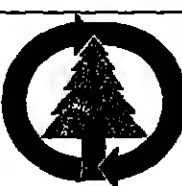
With compact discs now dominating the music market, just 3.7 million LPs were sold in Europe last year according to a survey today. But Britons were responsible for 2.3 million of these sales while some countries bought none, the consumer researcher Euromonitor reported.

However, UK music-lovers did not neglect CDs. Sales reached 164 million last year, second only to Germany's 213 million, although the biggest buyers per head were the Swiss, who purchased an average of 3.3 CDs each last year.

The findings also showed that Britain is second only to Germany in lawn-mower ownership, but that Belgians spend the most on garden products.

In addition, the survey recorded that nearly 22.5 million newspapers were sold every day in the UK last year – representing more than 23 per cent of the European market.

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هنا من الأصل

The single mums who say that going out to work is just impossible

Jojo Moyes and Esther Leach

Lesley Sheridan lives on a council estate in the south of England. She left an abusive relationship to bring up her two children alone, unemployed and surviving on benefits. She would fit the popular view of a single mother, as targeted by Labour's plans to lower the welfare bill by increasing the number of children in care.

But one of Lesley Sheridan's children has just finished university, while the other is at college. The state's investment in her time at home, she says, has been more than returned by the calibre of adults she has helped nurture.

"I'm no one special, I live on a council estate where it's not expected for children to do well. But my children's success is down to the fact that I was there, the time and energy I've put in. Showing them from pillar to post wouldn't have been successful; they were already emotionally damaged," she said yesterday.

As part of a drive against welfare dependency, the Prime Minister is expected to announce today that jobless single parents with schoolchildren will be given help to find work or training.

Government sources said the nine out of 10 single parents who wanted to work but could not would be invited to "discuss career plans". Mr Blair is also set to promise a project inspired by American "single mother clubs", where lone parents can leave their children until they finish work.

But many single mothers, like Lesley Sheridan, believe that the Government's plans ignore a fundamental truth about their circumstances: that their children are largely a product of broken relationships, and therefore in need of stability; and that until there is a radical shift in childcare arrangements, working will continue to be an impossibility. Not only is it expensive, ranging from £2 for

playgroup sessions to £70 per day for registered childcare, but employers still fail to take an enlightened approach to the irregular hours of parenting.

Julie Ward, 39, a mother of three from Keighley, West Yorkshire, is not a single mother by choice. Her husband left her a year ago for another woman and she had to give up her job in a wire factory to care for her two sons, both under five. Her 11-year-old daughter lives with her father.

"My children must come first and for the moment that prevents me from working. I want to work and I will when both boys are at school full time. I've never been out of work before," she said.

But she added: "I don't think it will be easy getting back to work - employers will want to

'My children's success is down to the fact that I was there, the time I've put in'

know how dependable I am. If my boys are ill or need their mother, they will have to come first. No one else can care for them. And who among employers will give me time off for school holidays?"

Jackie Gallagher, 18, pregnant with a six month old daughter, also from Keighley, has worked since she left school, first at a factory and then on a YTS scheme as a hairdresser. "I was with a local hairdresser for a year when I fell pregnant. My employer was also a single mother, so I thought she would understand. But I couldn't keep my job after all because I was sick during my pregnancy."

The massive growth in the number of single mothers - now around 1 million - has made them an easy target. They are blamed for everything from

an inflated welfare bill to soaring crime rates. Some reports yesterday suggested that benefits would be withheld from mothers of school age children who refused to go back to work, although Labour spokesmen were keen to downplay this yesterday, saying that there was "no question of compulsion".

"Crime studies show that it's the relationship between the parent and child that is the key thing, not whether that parent is working," says Radianee Strathdee, a research consultant and single mother from south-west London. She put herself through university while on benefits. Her own son is now studying at university.

"I wouldn't like to see a compulsory scheme. There's a danger of forcing parents into low-grade, long hours of employment which would do no one any good at all," she said.

"I realised very quickly that if I had to support my child I had to earn what a man can earn... so I went back and got a degree. I had to survive on a grant but the welfare state at that stage was sufficient to do that. It was a leg up," she said. "You couldn't do that now."

Compulsory or not, some single mothers believed that the tone of the plans smacked of a view of single mothers as "lazy". For these women, the chance to be back at work would be welcomed. But any change, they say, cannot be purely administrative. It has to weigh up the emotional cost on children, provide realistic, consistent childcare - and has to take into account the kind of adults society wants. None were too optimistic that Mr Blair's speech was going to provide that.

Lesley Sheridan said: "They're saying that married women should stay at home and look after children because of the family, but then they say if you're a single parent why aren't you going out to work? There's still this big emphasis on 'family' but the fact is, our families have changed. And you've got to have the back up."



The rise in the number of single mothers has made them an easy target

Photograph: Herbie Knott

Bosses bullying staff by e-mail

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Electronic mail is being used as a new tool for bullying and intimidating work colleagues, leading up to 1 in 70 people to resign from their jobs, says research.

The study, released today, shows that "flaming" colleagues and junior members of staff via office e-mail is a growing problem. More than half those surveyed in companies of all sizes had received abusive or insulting internal e-mail, while another 25 per cent knew of colleagues who had.

The survey, carried out for the computer network company Novell, found men are the worst electronic bullies, producing five times more "flames" than women; but men were also more likely to be abused. The sender and recipient also tended to be from the same department. Sales offices tended to be the worst offenders.

Dr David Lewis, a psychologist, said: "Flames are often the response of stressed managers working against impossible deadlines which in the past would have been dealt with by talking to the offender."

But there could be other reasons why men - and especially managers - would choose to send staff remotely. Research released last December suggested that school bullies could turn into captains of industry. Dr Lewis said: "Flaming is an electronic extension of the aggressive style of management with which they feel most comfortable."

Sometimes the sender of a flame would receive one back from its recipient: as one respondent told the survey: "You've got to give as good as you get or they'll walk all over you." But many times the receiver would have to hear the situation passively - leading to stress and lower morale.

A typical victim of flaming is Peter, 42, (not his real name), a social work team manager in a London borough who was targeted by his female boss. "I would arrive in at 8am and there would be five e-mails from her, written as late as 10.30 the previous night. Each would require considerable thought about how to respond... And I had other commitments."

The tone of the messages was often both condescending and demanding, said Peter, and they were frequently copied to a more senior member of staff. After 18 months Peter was signed off work by his doctor because of stress. Eventually he resigned.

E-mail systems are pervasive in most growing companies. By the end of this year it is estimated that 80 per cent of UK companies will have an internal e-mail system; and recent survey in the US found that the average American corporate user received 178 e-mails daily.

The text-based abuse via e-mail could range from sexual innuendo to endless streams of tasks with impossible timescales and to official reprimands which should have been delivered face-to-face.

Of the 1,043 people surveyed, 15 had left a job because of the effect of abusive e-mail. Novell estimates that the annual cost of flaming to a 100-person company would be about £182,000 in lost time and productivity, plus recruitment costs.

Rival biographers in row over Churchill family archive

Ian Burrell



Lady Soames: Accused of removing correspondence

A bitter row has broken out between rival biographers of Sir Winston Churchill's wife Clementine.

One of the biographers, Lady Mary Soames, Sir Winston's last surviving child, was accused yesterday of removing important correspondence from his archive despite the fact that the government paid £15m to ensure that the papers were available to the public. The suggestion has been furiously denied.

Joan Hardwick, whose biography of Clementine Churchill will be published later this month, writes in her preface: "The archive is not readily accessible to all scholars and writers who apply to see it..."

"The tradition of guarding the family image with the objective of keep-

ing it untarnished apparently continues."

Ms Hardwick was reported yesterday as saying: "It would have been better to have sold [the archive] to America, where people would have had easier access."

She released a copy of a letter written to her by Lady Soames in March last year, which states: "I will not be able to give you access to the letters or associated papers... until I have finished working on them. And it is not possible for me to forecast when that will be."

Lady Soames produced a biography of her mother 18 years ago and is currently compiling a book of her letters, due for publication next year.

But the suggestion that she had removed papers from the archive without authority was rejected by Dr Piers

Brendon, keeper of the Churchill Archive Centre at Cambridge University. "The papers are in my charge," he said. "They do not belong to Lady Soames. They belong to the trust, Lady Soames would not be allowed to do such a thing and to say otherwise is to accuse her of theft."

He said that Ms Hardwick had not been denied access to the archive. "These papers are fully accessible to everyone," he said.

Lady Soames was also supported by Andrew Roberts, author of *Emminent Churchillians*, who pointed out that she had copyright over her mother's personal letters. He said: "If Lady Soames wants to take the letters home and work on her biography of her mother and thereby denies them to a woman who is writing a knocking biography, then so long as they were not includ-

ed in the National Lottery deal she is well within her rights."

Ms Hardwick's biography, *Clementine Churchill, The Private Life of a Public Figure*, portrays Clementine as a deeply unhappy wife, sick from the nervous stress she suffered as a result of her married life.

She was, according to the book, miserable for most of her marriage, hated living in the family home at Chartwell and considered divorce.

Her personality was suppressed by her husband, who dismissed her strong views on women's suffrage as support for "the flappers' vote".

The account was rejected by Sir Robert Rhodes James, author of *The Complete Speeches of Sir Winston Churchill*, who said: "I have got no evidence of that at all; it seems highly improbable, I think it was a fairly stormy

marriage but a remarkably enduring one. The devotion to one another even in the letters that have been published is remarkable."

Lady Soames described her mother as the "perfect wife" in a biography published in 1979, two years after Clementine's death.

She wrote that Clementine supported Sir Winston "for the 57 years of their marriage, through the triumphs, disasters and tensions which ruled his public and private life".

In the view of Dr Brendon, Lady Soames's 1979 biography had also fairly reflected the volatile nature of the marriage. "She does acknowledge that they went through difficult times. She tells a wonderful story about Clementine throwing a plate of spinach at Winston. Things were difficult. I don't think any of this is new," he said.



Clementine Churchill: Stormy but enduring marriage

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Indiana Jones and the £33m hot metal ride

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

Theme-park Britain is destined to get a new spectacular if the Millennium Commission coughs up £15m to turn a redundant steel works in Rotherham into a white-knuckle ride in a giant ladle through waterfalls, heat and laser lights to the heart of an exploding furnace.

Rotherham council maintains that the Ride of Steel will be about "education and heritage" but when the project's advisers include the Disney-MGM Indiana Jones Stunt Theater and Universal Studio's Ghostbusters Show, the high-mindedness is hard to swallow.

Only last week, Sir Nicholas Goodison, chairman of the National Art Collection Fund, had the luminaries of the museums and galleries world nodding sagely when he said "interpretative, theme-park, play-time displays" detracted from the unique character of collections.

There is also a big question mark over whether another industrial heritage project, however hi-tech, can succeed in an area where visitor centres are almost as thick on the ground as once were the pits and factories they have replaced.

High-profile projects are struggling. Transperience, an historic bus collection-turned-theme park in Bradford, started with visitor forecasts of 350,000 a year and never topped 80,000. It won £8m of European and other public money yet is now in the hands of administrators. The Royal Armouries at Leeds forecast 1.3



Field of dreams: The Ride of Steel at Rotherham's planned Magna Centre, right, and the site it could occupy next to the river Don, above. Photograph: Peter Byrne

million visitors but is reckoned to be doing well drawing nearly 500,000.

Rotherham council says the £33m "Magna" centre could provide 500 full-time jobs and attract 400,000 visitors a year. Its bid for £15m from the Millennium Commission has cleared the first hurdle and a decision is expected in September. The European Commission is being targeted for £7m with the balance coming from other public and private sources.

Barbara Woronow, director of the Yorkshire and Humber-side Museums Council, is sceptical. "If public money is involved to any degree we need to have some honest and realistic business plans," she said. Magna is one of at least four

attractions in the area forecasting 400,000 visitors a year, including the National Centre for Popular Music under construction in Sheffield with Arts Council millions.

"It is just not possible to achieve this sort of a total increase in visitor numbers," Ms Woronow said. There are already 170 mainline museums and other attractions in the area and people have a relatively fixed amount of time and money to spare. A standard ticket to Magna, including the Ride of Steel, is expected to be £5.95.

Rotherham believes it can attract visitors from beyond Yorkshire. The council leader, Keith Billington, said Magna would be a "world-class" tourist attraction. "It is not about turning the

steel industry into a Disney theme park. Its themes are education and heritage. But we are also taking a hard-headed business approach."

Magna poses a dilemma for Sir Nicholas. With visitors travelling in a steel ladle through a tube to emerge above the floor of the works, it is exactly the sort of "play-time" project he abhors. Transperience, the Royal Armouries and the Natural History Museum's Earth Galleries are among his pet hates.

But the 42-acre site by the river Don, and the vast green building, the size of four football pitches, which once housed the world's biggest electric arc melting shop, belongs to British Steel - whose deputy chairman is Sir Nicholas Goodison.



The top draws

The top "themed" museums and industry attractions, with annual attendance figures:

Granada Studio Tours - 750,000 *
Jorvik Museum, York - 692,000**
National Museum of Photography, Bradford - 610,000
Cadbury World, Birmingham - 533,000
Museum of the Moving Image, London - 393,093
Gatwick Skyview - 390,000
Royal Armouries, Leeds - 382,000
Eureka! (Museum for Children), Halifax - 365,000
Beamish Open Air Museum, Co Durham - 364,000
Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester - 333,000
Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Shropshire - 276,000

1996 figures except *1995 and **1994. Source: British Tourist Authority, except **.

No, minister ... that's not how we do things here

It might not be "Sir Humphrey meets Dave Spurr", but the arrival of a new generation of ministers in Whitehall has caused bemusement and occasional hilarity.

The goodwill that greeted Labour's victory has been punctured in a few places by a clash of cultures less extreme than if Yes, Minister's civil servant met Private Eye's left-winger, but more real. New ministers must cope with the huge staff, the chauffeur-driven limousines and the constant attentions of their officials. Civil servants have had their slumbers disturbed by a daily diet of new initiatives and brain-storming sessions.

One minister said: "I've found it rather difficult to have all these civil servants around all the time. I'm used to discussing policy with people who are on-side, but some civil servants may be hostile to what you are trying to do. I find it difficult to be frank when I am in a room with people who are not 100 per cent behind me."

It can be intellectually challenging. Another minister said: "We have been used to being surrounded largely by yes men, quite junior researchers and press officers. Now we have to face the permanent secretaries and other civil servants who are not only older than us, they may be wiser, too."

Ministers' special advisers - their political appointees who are not civil servants - have been shocked to learn the extent to which their movements are monitored. One relates a tale of how he was picked up by his telephone to speak to a minister and three Civil Service colleagues picked up theirs at the same moment.

"I assumed they were all just making phone calls," he said. "But when I put my phone down, all theirs went down at the same time. It was only then that I realised they were all listening in."

On the civil servants' side, there is the need to cope with a change of culture which is not al-

Fran Abrams and Christian Wolmar find Whitehall trying to adapt to the wind of change

ways comprehensible. As one put it: "We were used to set ways of working. For example, everything had to be justified financially because ministers' first question was 'is it value for money?' Now we are allowed to put forward ideas which may not necessarily be the cheapest alternatives."

Some preconceptions have been fully justified. One special



Informality rules: Transport minister Glenda

adviser and his minister nearly wept with laughter when a civil servant responded to their suggestion, with a straight face, "You might say that, I couldn't possibly comment."

"Government is a little bit like a Rolls-Royce," one minister's special adviser explained. "You can sit very comfortably in the back seat and allow yourself to be driven if you like, but it takes a great deal more effort if you want to actually take over and get into the driving seat."

The phenomenon is being experienced in departments all over Whitehall. In some, the force for change is very public. Robin Cook stamped his personality on the Foreign Office in

his first week with a public "mission statement" and - horror of horrors - a video. The press conference cost £26,000 and the video £28,000. The event must have caused consternation among some of the fustier colonial throw-backs who still inhabit corners of Old Admiralty Building, but it made the point that life was about to change.

Others have resorted to compromise. Another minister - let us call him John - asked the staff in his private office to call him by his first name. Most, after some prompting, managed to bring themselves to do so. But one, unable to quite master this staggering informality, has resorted instead to "minister John". Glenda Jackson, transport minister, even sent a memorandum round asking everyone to call her by her first name.

While the clash of cultures has its funny side, it has also led to deep despondency. At least one special adviser goes home each night wondering whether he has achieved anything at all during the day.

The Whitehall paper-chase has also caused some consternation. While Shadow Cabinet ministers who received invitations to speak would simply tell their secretaries how they wished to reply, in government they must send copies to around 15 people for comment. Then a preliminary decision may be made, and the 15 people are again asked for their comments. And so it goes on as the minister's speech grinds through to completion.

John Battle, Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, asked his civil servants to provide him with a white board for his office so that he could write reminders to himself. The officials protested that he would have to cover it up whenever anyone else came in to the room because they might see something confidential.

"You don't really want me to have this white board, do you?" he complained. "Minister," they replied, "we are your white board."

High-flier set to be Blair's policy chief

Rachel Lomax, 51, who is expected to be named this week as head of the Downing Street policy unit, is one of the most successful women in the history of the Civil Service. After entering the Treasury at the age of 23 as an economist, she rose through the ranks to become Permanent Private Secretary to Nigel Lawson when he was Chancellor. She moved briefly to the Cabinet Office in 1994, where she worked with Sir Robin Butler, the head of the Home Civil Service.



Rachel Lomax: Economist

Mrs Lomax then spent 18 months at the World Bank in Washington, initially as the bank's troubleshooter for Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania, before

becoming chief-of-staff to the incoming president, James Wolfensohn. She returned to Britain last September to take up the post of Permanent Secretary at the Welsh Office. The daughter of two teachers, she attended Cheltenham Ladies College before gaining a first in history at Cambridge University and a second degree at the London School of Economics. She is divorced with two sons, one a doctor and the other a disc-jockey.

Handwritten note: 10/1/20

Taylor dismisses 'thought-police' fears



Ann Taylor: Nothing sinister

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

An allegation that Labour's database computer, Excalibur, is being used to impose "thought-police" control on MPs and others was yesterday dismissed by Ann Taylor, Leader of the Commons.

Mrs Taylor told BBC television's *On the Record* that Excalibur was simply an electronic library, and, as such, it could be expected to contain material on what people had said.

But it was alleged yesterday

that the file on Hugh Kerr, the left-wing Labour Member of the European Parliament for Hertfordshire East and Essex West, included other material, including alleged "misdeemeanours" like heckling Tony Blair during a private party reception.

Disclosure of the file provoked angry reaction from Labour MPs, and it is expected that some of them will take up the suggestion made by Mrs Taylor yesterday, that they should use the provisions of the Data Protection Act to inspect

the material held on them.

Mrs Taylor said that Excalibur, which was used as the heart of Labour's highly-successful rapid rebuttal work against the Tories during the election, was an electronic library.

"So if you feed any name in there, then you will get a reference sheet about what they've been saying."

"People can actually use the data protection legislation to find out what is one there about them. I don't think it's unreasonable to keep records of what we, as Members, say."

"Very often, we want to know ourselves what we've said on other occasions. We want to look at what other people have said."

"I presume they've got everything that I have said on the record and that's very wise because it means that if colleagues or television programmes are saying 'Ann Taylor said this on such a date', it can actually be checked."

"I think that we should all be prepared to stand by anything we have said and I don't think there is the sinister connotation

that everybody is talking about. I think it's important that we have things on the record and this is the modern way of keeping things on record."

During the election, Excalibur was repeatedly used to good effect to log what the Conservatives had done, and what they had said on various issues, on all occasions.

Labour briefing documents on subjects like the Conservative government's record on value added tax were definitive, reliable and highly useful - because they were able to bring to-

gether all the relevant quotes over time, by all the relevant ministers.

The media have similar database libraries, though not restricted to politics and government.

But if MPs find that Excalibur also contains extraneous "intelligence" input from party sources "informing" on private conversations and meetings, then the party leadership could face strong backbench criticism about a "Big Brother" system.

According to Mr Kerr's file,

he signed an advertisement opposing Mr Blair's proposed changes to Clause IV of the party constitution, and he not only heckled the leader but he also heckled a senior party official during a presentation to Euro MPs on the party's election strategy.

Evidently a prickly character, the file is also reported to allege that he had a public row with Wayne David, leader of the Labour group of MEPs, over Mr Kerr's place on a European Parliament delegation to Australia.

MI5 warns wannabe spies to keep mum about their ambition

A CAREER IN THE SECURITY SERVICE

Introduction

If you are considering a career in the Security Service you will want to know more about it and the way it operates. Your questions may include:

What does the Security Service do?
What kind of work might I do?
What can I tell people if I decide to apply?

This booklet aims to give you the answers to these questions. Further details about the work of the Service are to be found in a booklet published by HMSO entitled 'The Security Service', copies of which may be found at most libraries.

The role of the Security Service

The Security Service is the security intelligence agency of the United Kingdom. Its functions are defined by Parliament, and its powers are limited by law.



Discretionary role: Stephen Lander (inset), who took over as MI5's head at its Millbank HQ from Stella Rimington, backs limited openness - as the job form stresses

Ben Summers

Only Miss Moneybags is to know. Hundreds of would-be James Bonds who responded to a groundbreaking Security Service recruitment advertisement two weeks ago cannot boast to their friends or relatives of their ambition.

The advertisements, published in newspapers last month, advised those interested in applying for work with MI5 to call a number for more information, "but try and avoid telling your friends about your application, because discretion is a serious part of working for the Security Service".

Those who model themselves faithfully on 007 will be cooking an eyebrow at the application pack questionnaire's postscript: "Everyone who is eligible to join the service will receive equal treatment... there will be no discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, marital status or disability".

The pack also reinforces the message about discretion: "You must keep your tongue and generally refrain from talking about your work outside the Service".

New recruits have the chance to be involved in glamorous sounding "investigation and countering of terrorism, espionage by foreign intelligence services against UK interests and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction".

But the job description also raises the spectre of work in "financial and resource management" - a reminder that assignments in MI5 are usually less glamorous and more desk bound.

MI5, who carry out intelligence-gathering abroad. Operational work for MI5, it says, is more likely to involve recruiting and running agents or managing surveillance teams.

The recruitment exercise is a logical development from the policy of measured openness which began in 1989 when MI5 was placed on a statutory basis and acknowledged to exist for the first time under its then head, Stella Rimington. A booklet was later published by HMSO, entitled 'The Security Service'. Under Mrs Rimington's successor, Stephen Lander, the policy has continued and with the job advertisements the service is casting its net more widely than in the past, when new recruits were likely to be signed up from the Civil Service, or over sherry in a tutor's room at an Oxbridge college.

The advertisements are aimed at a different kind of person altogether: "level one" was aimed at young people with three or four years of work behind them, degrees not obligatory, and "level two" those "with a proven track record of managing people and resources" from a wide range of background, such as "teachers, fund raisers, overseas aid workers and journalists".

The response to the advertisements, placed by recruitment consultants Austin Knight, was enormous. The information telephone line was apparently connected to a single over-worked answering machine. The lucky few who managed to leave their names and addresses should now have received their Security Service job application pack and have less than a week to complete an eight-page form plus a five-page questionnaire requiring mini essays to demonstrate their ability to plan and organise, handle change, and resolve problems.

The salary offered is modest, considering the range of abilities sought: £19,000 for the level one posts and £24,000 for level two (with only "exceptional" cases eligible for more up to a ceiling of £30,000). And to achieve that, applicants have to pass a five-stage interview procedure, which includes a day-long assessment and a security interview with a vetting officer, presumably to explain away that youthful dalliance with the Communist Party or the gay campaign group Stonewall.

The covering letter sent with the pack is written by someone called "The Recruitment Advisor". Applicants may find the process impersonal, but they will be cheered to see that "The Recruitment Advisor" has taken the time to sign letters personally, albeit with a single initial. It looks a little like a "D" or an "O" - and very much like a "Q".



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Woman in E.coli outbreak dies

An elderly female victim of last year's *E. coli* 0157 outbreak in Central Scotland died yesterday, bringing the total death toll to 20 - the highest number of fatalities caused by the bug in a single outbreak.

The unnamed woman died in Bankview nursing home, Banknock, Central Scotland, where she was a resident, the Forth Valley Health Board said. She had been confirmed as having the infection during the outbreak that hit Lanarkshire and Central Scotland last November and December, and had never fully recovered.

Officials said the woman's death brought the total from the outbreak in the Forth Valley area to eight. Six of those - five women and one man - were residents of the nursing home. Before the Scottish outbreak, the worst recorded worldwide was in Canada in 1995, when 19 pensioners in a nursing home died from the infection.

The *E. coli* outbreak began

last November, when several pensioners fell ill after attending a church lunch in Wishaw, Strathclyde. The first death, on 26 November, was that of Harry Shaw, 80. The next day, local butcher John Barr closed his shop as a major health investigation intensified. As the death toll grew, Scotland's senior law officer, the Lord Advocate, announced a fatal accident inquiry was to be held. The government ordered a scientific inquiry, led by Professor Hugh Pennington, which called for sweeping changes in food safety.

Mr Barr appeared in court on 10 January accused of culpable and reckless conduct in relation to the alleged supply of contaminated meat. He is still awaiting trial. His shop reopened on 27 February. Since then, Scotland has had several more outbreaks of *E. coli* 0157, and no explanation has yet emerged as to why it seems to be more prevalent there than in England.

Two people died in an out-

break in Arbroath, and there have been other, non-fatal, outbreaks in Edinburgh and the Borders. Health officials were investigating 30 cases of *E. coli* 0157 among patients, staff and visitors at a unit for the frail elderly at Falkirk Royal Infirmary in Central Scotland. Of these victims, only four were still showing symptoms yesterday, and all were in a stable condition.

THE INDEPENDENT

What if our children never saw a dormouse?

Or a badger. Or an otter. Or a water vole or a brown hare? They're all under threat from intensive farming and commercial development.

To support National Wildlife Week, The Independent and The Wildlife Trusts are publishing a special supplement.

Is further decline inevitable? Or is there hope for British wildlife?

Britain's Wildlife Supplement in The Independent Friday 6th June



DAILY POEM

14:50: Rosekinghall

(Beaching Memorial Railway, Forfarshire Division)

By Don Paterson

The next train on Platform 6 will be the 14.50 Rosekinghall - Gallowhill and Blindwell, calling at:

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The poems in Don Paterson's second collection, *God's Gift to Women*, concern the "perennial obsessions of sex, drink, music, death" and, of course, "trains". This one, like several others, takes its title "from the stations of the old Dundee-Newtyle railway", used by Dr Beaching. *God's Gift to Women* has now arrived at Faber & Faber, price £6.99.

international

France comes out for Jospin in poll rout

Victory has fallen into the lap of the Socialists, writes John Lichfield in Paris

Two months ago Lionel Jospin was booed and jostled as a yesterday's man by a leftist crowd at an anti-National Front demonstration in Strasbourg.

A month ago, he was thought to have no chance of winning a snap parliamentary election which had caught his Socialist Party ill-prepared (just as President Jacques Chirac had intended it would).

Last night, Mr Jospin, 59, was Prime Minister-elect. President Chirac's strategy, and his presidency, were in ruins. France faced five years of left-right power-sharing, or "co-habitation", in which Mr Jospin, as leader of the parliamentary majority, will have the whip's hand.

How did Mr Jospin do it? In all truth, he didn't. The victory, to a large extent, fell into his lap. The Socialist leader has once again proved an energetic and able campaigner. But his main achievement in the past few weeks has been to offer a likeable and competent alternative to an inordinately unpopular government running a desperately incompetent campaign.

There is no clear decision by the French people to turn to the left; there is no wide, popular enthusiasm for, or confidence in, the Socialist party, and certainly not in its Communist allies. In the first round of the election, the two political formations in the centre-right government attracted less than one in four of the possible voters. But the Socialists and the other left-wing parties attracted the votes of just over one in four of the potential electorate. This is the lowest first-round support for the ultimate governing parties in nearly 40 years of the Fifth Republic.

There was a clear rejection last



Change of habit: A nun in Roubaix leaving the polling booth yesterday after casting her ballot in the second and final round of the French parliamentary elections. Photograph: Reuters

And what of the single currency? It now seems impossible that the euro will arrive both strong and on time. Mr Jospin campaigned for a more relaxed interpretation of the Maastricht guidelines for Economic and Monetary Union (Emu). He is not prepared to impose further short-term budgetary or fiscal pain on the stuttering French economy to meet the Emu targets. He is not prepared to join a single currency which excludes Italy and Spain, possibly placing French farmers and manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage.

It is clear that the mood of the French people backs Mr Jospin rather than the old policy of Emu-or-bust. But the single currency, if it is not to be a disaster on birth, has to meet the test of the international bond markets (something Mr Jospin prefers to forget).

With a single currency civil war still raging in the German establishment, the advent of the Left in France may provide an opportunity for some sort of global Emu compromise; or it could derail the euro altogether.

The great unknown is how President Chirac will take to co-habitation and whether he will survive it. On the surface, there is no reason why he should not run along as well as President Mitterrand did. Mr Chirac is a clubbable man and a man without a fixed ideology. He should manage, as Mitterrand did, to co-exist with the opposition, while trying to trip them up when he can. The uncertainty comes from the tangle of investigations under way into the dubious finances of his RPR party. Without centre-right hands on all the levers of power, one or two of these investigations might come uncomfortably close to the President himself.

night of the deflationary policy of the centre-right government, which put the shrinking of the welfare state and the private sector, and the creation of the European single currency, ahead of tackling unemployment. President Chirac promised to do the opposite when he was elected two years ago, and has paid the price.

The striking fact is that the French electorate has turned out its government (but not its President) at every opportunity it has been given to do so in the past two decades. The last time a French parliamentary majority was re-elected was in 1978. In the five parliamentary elections since then, France has moved left, right, left

right and then left again. No other country in Europe has such a record of political fractiousness, or, increasingly it has to be said, contempt for politicians of all persuasions. Mr Jospin can look forward to five years in power. But, unlike Tony Blair in Britain, he does not inherit a benign economy. With unemployment

at 12.8 per cent and growth stuttering, he has little room for manoeuvre. The outgoing government had placed all its bets on the medium and long-term benefits of tax cuts, and a strong single currency. Mr Jospin's prescriptions are mostly short-term: government action to create 700,000 jobs for young people, half in the

state sector, and a gradual move to a 35-hour week without loss of pay. A Jospin government will continue some of the state-shrinking reforms begun by Prime Minister Alain Juppé's ill-fated government, and quietly abandon others. There is little here to improve France's long-term competitiveness.

... and in Germany, Kohl rallies the troops for battle

Imre Karacs Bonn

Chancellor Helmut Kohl summoned leaders of the governing parties to an emergency meeting last night in an effort to forge an unprecedented common front against the Bundesbank.

After a flurry of bitter exchanges, Mr Kohl rallied his troops for the battles ahead, expected to culminate a week on Friday in a parliamentary vote on the central bank's gold reserves. The government's plan to raise the bank value of the Bundesbank's gold and sink the proceeds into state debts has provoked a rebellion within the coalition parties.

Two MPs have already said they will oppose the bill in parliament, cutting Mr Kohl's majority to three.

To prevent further defections, senior government figures have launched a counter-attack, warning Frankfurt against recruiting allies in parliament. "I expect the Bundesbank to respect the legislative independence of politics just as politics always respects the independence of the Bundesbank in monetary policy," Theo Waigel, the Finance Minister, said at the weekend.

Wolfgang Schäuble, the parliamentary leader of Mr Kohl's Christian Democrats, amplified that message in a letter to his MPs.

"The decision on the question we now face is to be taken by the legislature, whose independence is no less than that of the Bundesbank," Mr Schäuble wrote.

The central bank argues, however, that the government's

plans violate its own constitutionally enshrined independence. The Bundesbank has publicly deplored the manoeuvre as "interference in the independence of the central bank".

Wilhelm Hankel, a former member of the Bundesbank council, was even more forthright.

"No finance minister since Hitler's time has dared to make

such a grab at the central bank as Mr Waigel," he said.

The perception that Mr Kohl's government is perpetrating something undemocratic at the heart of the bitter dispute.

The Social Democrats are now backing the Bundesbank, and calling for the government's resignation. Leading economists and some Christian Democrat grandees are also

campaigning against the government.

The private banks, naturally, have sided with their colleagues, but industry is pleading for a truce.

And the government has received unexpected support from the white-collar workers' trade union, whose leaders believe that Mr Waigel's accounting trick would save thousands of public-sector jobs.

But all sides are beginning to recognise that an escalation is in no one's interest. The Bundesbank's prophecy that Mr Waigel's plan would undermine public confidence in the currency of today and tomorrow has already been partly fulfilled. The Deutschmark is on the slide and the markets are convinced that the German accounting trick will pave the way for a soft euro.

English-French tension threatens Canada's PM

Hugh Winsor Ottawa

The rise of the ultra-conservative Reform Party is threatening the majority of the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, although his Liberal Party will probably hang on to power in today's voting, following a divisive election campaign which has heightened English-French tensions.

The Reform Party, led by former petroleum consultant Preston Manning, is based in western Canada, and has made an assault on special status for Quebec the centrepiece of its election campaign.

The party is running only a handful of candidates in Quebec and Atlantic Canada and thus could not win enough seats to form a government. But it has solidified its support in Alberta and British Columbia by playing to the resentment in some English-speaking parts of the country that the French-speaking minority, based mostly in Quebec, has been getting



Jean Chrétien: Stumbled through the campaign without ever providing a convincing reason for calling an early election

special privileges in the Canadian confederation. The Reform Party has also been pushing a law-and-order agenda which calls for a referendum to consider re-establishing capital punishment for murder and has accused the

Liberals of being too soft on violent criminals while ignoring the rights of victims.

The party has exploited a change in the electoral law which allows criminals in prison to vote for the first time to push its theme.

Even though the Reform Party has no presence in Quebec, it has seized on the debate about the future of Quebec and what concessions, if any, should be made to counter the threat of separatism as a vehicle to raise support in the rest of the country for its hard-nosed approach.

The status of Quebec within the Canadian confederation has bedevilled national politics since the first separatist party won power in the Quebec provincial election in 1976, and this is the second time that a federal wing of that party – the Bloc Québécois – has run candidates in a national election.

In the current parliament, the Bloc which runs candidates only in Quebec won enough seats in what has become a five-party group to form the official opposition. But in the intervening period since the last national election, there has been a provincial election where the separatists have regained power. Now some of the Quebec nationalists are questioning whether having a Quebec-only

party in the national parliament is still relevant.

A combination of those doubts and the poor performance of the Bloc Québécois leader, Gilles Duceppe, has created some new opportunities in Quebec for the Conservative Party led by a charismatic and fluently bilingual lawyer, Jean Charest. His promise of reaching out to nationalist Quebecers by offering to renegotiate a partnership with the rest of the country has proved more attractive to many French-speaking Quebecers than the status quo option being offered by Prime Minister Chrétien and the Liberals.

In an attempt to shore up the separatist vote, both the Quebec premier, Lucien Bouchard, and his predecessor, Jacques Parizeau, have been called into the campaign by the Bloc Québécois. It has been the Reform Party's anti-Quebec rhetoric, however, that has been more effective in stopping the haemorrhage of the separatist vote.

Even though Prime Minister Chrétien is also a Quebecer, he has been less popular in his home province than he is in the rest of the country. But he has stumbled through an election campaign without ever providing a convincing reason for calling an election after only three and a half years, when he did not need to call one before 1998.

Without a major issue other than to boast about the government's record in improving Canada's fiscal performance, the Liberals have been a target for all of the other parties and have been damaged on different issues by different parties.

Jumping into the leadership vacuum, Mr Manning has questioned the ability of prime ministers from Quebec properly to represent the country in the national unity debate and has generally been seen to exacerbate English-French relations.

But the Liberals have retained their support in the largest and most prosperous province, Ontario, and that will allow them to hold on to power in a divided parliament.

There will always be those pillow-chewing moments in life, recollections so embarrassing that in the small and private hours they continue to force you into the foetal position no matter how long ago they occurred.

Present on a horribly long (and otherwise secret) list is my last row with a Russian in a restaurant. It happened not here but in Los Angeles, a city as removed in character and habit from Moscow as Basingstoke is from Belfast. The stray ember that lit the fuse was both trivial and, in retrospect, odd: clothes.

I was soon to leave LA after four years of working there, an occasion to be marked by a dinner with fellow British correspondents at a newly opened Russian restaurant on the chic West Side. There were several dozen guests. One, a courteous and quiet-spoken colleague, arrived wearing a smart pair of trousers which also happened to be made of blue denim. I may be wrong, but I believe they were even pressed.

He was immediately ejected. California, where only one in three males owns a necktie and where over-50s waddle about in leggings bright enough to upstage a flamingo, is an easy-going state by any standards, yet it still has pockets of pretension. Jeans violated the restaurant's dress code. And my colleague, the hood guarding the door decided, was guilty of wearing them.

What annoyed me more than the arbitrariness of the rules, the uncouth manner in which they were enforced, or my friend's evident discomfort, was the fact that the heavy himself was less well-dressed than he. An off-duty policeman moonlighting for the Russians as a security guard, his fish-bowl belly was covered by a T-shirt. During the argument that at once erupted, I recall pointing out curtly that he should practise what he preaches. "This is not a T-shirt," he declared haughtily. "It's a designer T-shirt."

Of course, we all left. By then, the Russian proprietor was involved and the mood was worsening. As we bundled off into

MOSCOW DAYS

the darkness in search of another eating place. I remember firing a parting volley in the form of the only insult I knew in Russian, "Durak!" The owner looked suitably stunned.

This exchange came flooding back the other day when I was browsing through a book called *A Dictionary of Russian Slang & Colloquial Expressions*. I quite often use the word "durak", having long laboured under the impression that it unequivocally and exclusively means "fool". It now transpires that this was not the *most* just that I thought it was. Had I known its other meaning – male genitalia – I would have been more sparing. I have no desire to be punched or, for that matter, shot.

The lesson is that slang is best left to those who know what they are doing. It is a lawless area of any language, where mistakes can be dangerous. And, in Russia, there were until recently few written guidelines for non-native speakers. Under the Soviet Union, the Communist Party tried to outlaw slang, censoring it whenever it appeared. For more than 70 years, research into the seamy aspects of the vernacular was virtually non-existent. In fact (according to the *Dictionary of Russian Slang & Colloquial Expressions*) linguists who were interested in the real evolution of Russian – as opposed to the officially manipulated Orwellian version – had only one reference book, a volume called *Thieves' Cant*, published in 1908. There were compilations of criminal slang but these were only for the use of the police, whom the authorities encourage to bone up on villains' argot in the belief this would help catch them.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become a popular area of study, spawning a crop of books which have shed light on a dank and fertile corner of society. Certain themes, the inevitable stuff of slang wherever you are, loom large –

sex, sexism, drink, racism, nasty authorities. But there is also a wonderfully inventive and absurdist quality which is peculiarly Russian.

If, for example, you want to observe that someone has a large backside, you might remark "U nye ne zad, a balkou" – "that's not a behind he's got, but a balcony" (Balkonches, which adorn most city apartments, are largely used for storing pickled food and junk having a generally unromantic image here). Someone with a particularly fat face will be accused of being an "afisha" – a poster. If you bore a Russian by continually asking a question like "what happens now?", they'll fire back: "And now, cat's soup" – a loose version of "it's none of your business".

Pleasingly, the mother tongue has wrought her revenge on those who tried to pimp for her.

the party slogan writers. One of the banners of Stalinism was the phrase "if the enemy won't surrender, we will utterly consume him". The modern version is rendered over a charged glass, as a toast: "The enemy is vodka, so we will utterly consume it."

Those who do so to excess suffer the risk of "asphalt sickness", the term applied for the wounds acquired by those who fall over drunk. If he is blind drunk, or "on his eyebrows", he may end up being dragged off by the police to the "akvariym" – a sobering-up cell. There are, of course, heaps of other examples, mostly unprintable. My favourite, for sheer bizarreness, is a term used for an incompetent or a weakling who pretends to be a tough guy: he is a "pregnant nail" – in other words, useless.

That, had I known it, would have been my choice of insult after our spat at the restaurant. "These are not jeans, they are designer jeans. Anyone can see that, you pregnant nail."

Phil Reeves

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Palestine war claim third victory



Election Turkey

Palestine's land war claims third victim

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

The killing of a third Palestinian land dealer at the weekend and the attempted kidnapping of a fourth for allegedly selling land to Israelis marks a stepping up of the war over the control of land in Jerusalem.

The body of Mohammed Ali Jamhour, a 33-year-old Palestinian, was found dumped on a minor road just outside the Palestinian enclave of Ramallah. He had been shot twice in the neck. Israeli police said yesterday that they foiled the kidnapping of a second Palestinian when they stopped a car on its way to Ramallah and arrested six men, armed with pistols, who were holding him.

Mr Jamhour was almost certainly killed because he was involved in the sale of a house previously owned by Palestinians in the Abu Tor district of Jerusalem to an extreme Israeli settler organisation called Elad. Along with its sister organisation Ateret Cohanim (Crown of the Priests) Elad is dedicated to replacing Palestinians with Jews in Jerusalem.

Three land dealers have been killed in the past three weeks. Israeli police said that four of the armed men held for kidnapping were members of Preventive Security, the largest Palestinian security service. They accused a Preventive officer in Ramallah of organising an earlier killing. Shai Bazaq, the Israeli Prime Minister's spokesman, said: "Land dealers have been murdered with the open encouragement of senior figures in the Palestinian Authority."

The land war in and around Jerusalem has escalated since Benjamin Netanyahu became



Killed: Mohammed Ali Jamhour

Prime Minister a year ago. Settler organisations, which had suspended operations under the previous Labour government, starting taking over Palestinian properties. The building of a new Jewish settlement at Har Homa, known to Palestinians as Jabal Abu Ghneim, in south-east Jerusalem, has increased the Palestinian sense that they are losing any chance of ever establishing their capital in the city.

The Muslim religious authorities in Jerusalem said yesterday that they would not allow Mr Jamhour to be buried in a Muslim cemetery. Farid Bashiti, the first land dealer to die last month, was also forbidden burial. His family, who deny he sold land to Israelis, had to bury him secretly in Haifa in northern Israel. Frieih Abu Medein, the Palestinian Justice Minister, said: "The man was punished because Palestinians do not accept traitors."

Palestinian human rights organisations have appealed for the Palestinian Authority to stop the killings. Khader Shkeirah, head of the human rights group LAW, called "for the cancellation of the death penalty, and if there is any suspicion that some-

body sold land to Israelis he should be tried in an open, civil court." However, the land dealers have little popular sympathy. Ordinary Palestinians feel they have little land left and Israel effectively prevents them buying land from Israelis.

Israeli aircraft carried out rocket attacks in Lebanon yesterday after Hizbollah, the Lebanese guerrilla group, killed an Israeli officer in a mortar attack.

Lieutenant Yuval Nir, 22, was the tenth Israeli to be killed this year by the guerrillas, who have stepped up attacks in recent weeks. Israel had hoped that Hizbollah might be losing its effectiveness after a number of unsuccessful operations in which the guerrillas suffered losses.



Tour of duty: A heavily-guarded Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, arriving yesterday in Brcko, in the heart of Bosnian Serb territory. During a weekend visit to the Balkans she reasserted American determination that indicted war criminals be brought to justice. Photograph: Reuters

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have been cut by

10%

Early election for Turkey

Christopher de Bellaigue
Ankara

The two partners in Turkey's 11-month old coalition government yesterday announced that they would be calling early elections. Tansu Ciller, the deputy prime minister, will succeed Necmettin Erbakan as prime minister before the end of this month.

Mr Erbakan and Mrs Ciller defended the record of their government, and said that the election would be held "as soon as possible" and "in a reasonable time".

Mr Erbakan's Welfare Party - the first Islamist party to lead a government in modern Turkey - can expect to do well in a snap poll. Mrs Ciller's True Path Party, whose dissenting voices contribute to the government's

disintegration, badly needs a breather before facing the voters. Mrs Ciller hopes that a stint as prime minister - however short - will help her rebuild morale amongst her exhausted colleagues.

For the moment, the short-term future of the government is dependent on its ability to co-opt the eight-strong Grand Union Party. The unionists are demanding amendments to the election law in return for co-terminating the government.

Subject to unionist agreement, the government should be able to secure the parliamentary majority which it needs to hold an election. In practice the need to produce a new election law means a poll is unlikely before the autumn. Welfare is keen to go the polls before 1998, however.

significant shorts

Sierra Leone's coup leader names council

Negotiators said yesterday they had struck a deal with coup-makers to bring back Sierra Leone's ousted civilian president, but the new military leader went ahead with naming his ruling council.

Diplomats hosting talks with the army played down the radio announcement, saying they still expected a deal to be signed. Major Johnny Paul Koromah announced a 20-member council, with the rebel leader Foday Sankoh as vice chairman, and including three more members of Mr Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

Reuters - Freetown

Six die in Algiers blast

A powerful explosion rocked Algiers, killing six people, five days before the legislative elections opposed by Muslim militants. The blast came a day after a cinema in central Algiers was bombed, killing one person and wounding two dozens others.

AP - Algiers

Birds lay siege to runway

A flock of hawks closed one of the runways at Cairo airport after a small plane killed one of their companions during takeoff. The flock circled over the runway and dispersed only after the body of the dead hawk was removed.

Reuters - Cairo

Jumping over the Yellow River

Saying it would be his last stunt before retirement, 44-year-old Ke Shouliang of Taiwan jumped 50 metres over the Hukou waterfall on the Yellow River, China, in a sports car, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

AP - Peking

Thief strangled by cook

A cook and a waiter chased a thief who held up their all-you-can-eat steakhouse with a toy gun, and strangled him, the *Clarín* daily reported. Claudio Bruni threatened staff at the El Parador steakhouse in central Buenos Aires, Argentina, with what later turned out to be a plastic imitation of a 38 calibre revolver and made off with \$200 (£125).

Reuters - Buenos Aires

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US academics join rush to deny Turkish massacre of Armenians

Robert Fisk
Washington

Slaughter viewed as accident of First World War

In a country where denial of the Jewish Holocaust could yet become a crime, denial of an earlier but almost equally vicious genocide – that of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915 – is becoming an almost day-to-day affair in the United States.

Thanks to the diligent work of the Turkish embassy in Washington, a group of passive US congressmen and pro-Turkish academics at several leading American universities, the century's first holocaust – in which 1.5 million Armenians were slaughtered – is being transformed, against all the evidence to the contrary, into a mere side-effect of the First World War rather than a deliberate act of race persecution.

Barely an hour after *The Independent* had telephoned an American public relations company which is bidding to work for the Turkish government, documents were delivered to my Washington hotel, all of them purporting to prove that the Ottoman Turks never set out to slaughter 1.5 million Armenians in 1915. Many suggested that the tens of thousands of Armenian women and children sent on death marches into

what is now Syria during the First World War were the tragic victims of civil war unrest rather than the victims of deliberate annihilation.

One paper, by Justin McCarthy, a history professor at the University of Louisville, stated bluntly: "I do not believe the Ottoman government ever intended a genocide of Armenians ... it was in fact in the regions where Ottoman control was weakest that columns of Armenians suffered most."

In reality, captured Turkish government papers, diplomatic accounts, contemporary newspaper reports and witness evidence prove beyond doubt that the Turkish authorities – suspecting treachery among the Ottoman empire's minority Christians – set out to annihilate their Armenian community in 1915.

Across southern and eastern Turkey, Armenian men were rounded up and butchered in mass Bosnia-style killings while their families were sent into the Syrian desert where they died in their tens of thousands, raped and murdered by Kurdish tribesmen as well as by Turkish



An Armenian priest is hanged. Photograph: Yaphan Picturepoint

gendarmes. A cave in which thousands of Armenians were deliberately asphyxiated with smoke by Turkish militiamen – the 20th-century's first primitive gas chamber – still exists in the Syrian desert. Western newspaper correspondents, Methodist missionaries and Henry Morgenthau, the US ambassador to

the Ottoman Empire, all compiled evidence of the massacres in which the Turks were involved. Even military advisers from Germany – Ottoman Turkey's First World War allies – complained to Berlin about the atrocities, which were debated in the Reichstag.

Yet denial of the Armenian holocaust continues to gather pace in the US. Turkish government endowments to American universities suggest that Ankara might, in the words of the *Boston Globe*, be trying "to buy academic absolution from the dark past of the Armenian massacre".

The Turkish government has given \$3m (£1.8m) to US universities, including Harvard – which denies there are any conditions attached. But the most controversial appointment has been at Princeton where Dr Heath Lowry, who disputes the reality of the Armenian holocaust, holds the Atatürk Chair in Turkish Studies. In one of his works, Dr Lowry claims that the account of the genocide by Ambassador Morgenthau, who was Jewish, comprises "crude half-truths and outright falsehoods ... from cover to cover".

In his new book *Black Dog of Fate*, Armenian history professor Peter Balakian – whose family survived the Armenian massacres – describes how, while he was speaking at a meeting in New York to mark Armenian holocaust day, Turkish demonstrators handed out pamphlets claiming "Armenians were deported because they were a security threat and were massacring Muslims ...".

Mr Balakian, who is also a poet, has lobbied Congress to mark 24 April, when the massacres started among the Armenian intelligentsia, as Armenian holocaust day.

But to no avail. Turkish lobbyists have regularly prevailed upon the US administration not to mark the day, reminding congressmen of the vital NATO role played by Turkey and its alliance with Washington, and insisting that the Armenian holocaust was merely a badly handled "relocation" of Turkey's Armenian population.

Mr Balakian believes that Turkish pressure groups began to achieve success in the US as long ago as 1934 when MGM dropped a project to film *The*

Forty Days of Musa Dagh, the story of the Armenian resistance to Turkish attacks on a mountain town in 1915.

Yet despite the support of Jewish academics for acknowledgement of the earlier Holocaust, Israel failed the Armenians in 1982 when it gave way to pressure from Turkey and forced the cancellation of a conference on the Jewish Holocaust and its 6 million victims in which Armenians would have described their own genocide. Elie Wiesel, the Jewish Holocaust survivor, pulled out of the conference after pressure from the Israeli foreign ministry. Turkey is today Israel's most powerful Muslim military ally.

Mr Balakian said: "What this is about is a refusal to acknowledge genocide. We should have apologies from the Turks and the proper moral representation in history."

"Genocide denial is the last phase of genocide. It denounces the victims and rehabilitates the perpetrators. It also robs the victim's culture of all moral order ... I feel we Armenians are being stalked by the perpetrators 82 years later."

"We can't heal until there is a full confirmation of the Armenian genocide in the public discourse of world history."



Last rites: Protesters carry a mock coffin to symbolise the death of democracy during yesterday's Tiananmen commemoration. Photograph: Reuters

Flag of defiance flies for Tiananmen

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

The building that houses the official Chinese news agency in Hong Kong was temporarily enveloped in a giant banner de-

picting the Goddess of Democracy yesterday as protesters gathered for a defiant commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Organisers say that more than 7,000 people joined the protest, more than last year. A bigger rally is expected on Wednesday, the eighth anniversary of the massacre.

It is unclear whether rallies of this kind will be permitted next year as Hong Kong returns to Chinese sovereignty. However, Cheung Man-kwong a



Hong Kong handover

leader of the democracy movement, vowed that the protesters would be back.

As usual the demonstration was orderly but noisy with many bystanders showing their approval and stuffing money in collection boxes.

Marin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party, said: "Many people, I'm sure, have stayed away because of fear. You see so many photographers here taking pictures. Most of them are genuine, but I'm sure there are some from the Chinese government and people don't know what will happen to them if they're captured in these photos."

In past years, interest in the demonstrations had been falling off. But numbers swelled this year and last year, perhaps because participants believe they

will no longer be able to protest against the Chinese government in public.

Hong Kong's incoming administration may not ban protests outright but there are already signs that administrative measures will be taken to hinder the organisation of rallies. Local councils have recently banned the display of a "Pillar of Shame" statue in two major parks. The statue, by the Danish sculptor Jens Galsbolch, was commissioned to commemorate the massacre.

17 killed as East Timor rebels step up attacks

Richard Lloyd Parry
Jakarta

The Indonesian elections have been denounced as undemocratic and fraudulent by election monitoring organisations, opposition parties and the United States government, as rebels in East Timor continued to inflict casualties on the Indonesian military in the latest in a series of attacks.

Seventeen soldiers and policemen were killed on Saturday after a hand grenade was thrown into their truck during an ambush near the town of Baucau. The attack brings to 41 the number of people killed in the past week in what appears to be the biggest concerted offensive in many years by the pro-independence guerrillas.

The attacks coincide with a change over in the military command which, though routine, draws attention to Jakarta's continuing need to commit disproportionate resources to the territory.

Hours after the attack, the Indonesian government's military commander in East Timor formally surrendered his command after a two-year tour of duty.

The attacks over the past few days put the lie to the belief that significant Timorese resistance has ended, and mark the climax of the most violent election campaign in 30 years. The ruling Golkar party of President Suharto won 74 per cent of the votes in last Tuesday's poll – an even greater majority than expected.

However, the result was condemned by two independent monitoring organisations, and by the main opposition United Democratic Party (PDP), whose supporters rioted on the island of Madura after allegations that ballot boxes had been eliminated from the count.

A team of election monitors from the Asian Forum for Human Rights claimed that the military had interfered in polling and deplored the "atmosphere of fear" at polling stations.

The group said in a statement: "We express grave alarm that the peoples of Indonesia should suffer violations of their sacred right to vote freely without fear or reprisal."

The Independent Election Monitoring Committee said its 8,000 volunteers in 47 cities had found evidence of multiple voting, intimidation of party scrutineers, discrimination in the treatment of voters and various procedural irregularities.

"There is an indication that there was a systematic violation of the rules," the committee's chairman said.

The US State Department called on Jakarta to investigate the reported abuses. "We also believe Indonesia should move toward a political system in which the will of the people can be heard," a spokesman said.

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THE World of Lily Wong by LARRY FEIGN © 1997

2 June 1997

MEANWHILE, IN BEIJING...

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Lily's creator receives human rights award

The cartoonist Larry Feign (drawn in a self-portrait, right) has received an award in the Hong Kong Human Rights Press Awards for his Lily Wong cartoon strip, published by *The Independent*. The judges expressed

regret that Mr Feign's work is no longer published in Hong Kong itself. The awards are jointly sponsored by Amnesty International and the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Hong Kong.



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arts

Manic street preacher

For four decades, Ivor Cutler has been peddling his words to a public that has not always been very understanding. Now, at the age of 74, the poet's prim and improper brand of absurdity is finally being paid some serious attention. By **Judith Palmer**

"O h dear," frets Ivor Cutler down the phone, as we try and fix up a time to meet. "I just can't see how this will work. It's your voice. It's far too tense."

"My sister came over to see me once from Israel, and I had to tell her to go away again. She was far too tense."

"If you can keep your talking to the absolute minimum, that might be a good idea," he considers, his voice trailing off to a whisper, "and I'll wear my earplugs."

The phone rings again. "Have you ever taken homeopathic remedies?" peeps Cutler frailly. "I have one here to help with interviews. It's called Argent Nit. If you were to get some this afternoon and take large quantities until we meet, I think come Monday, it'll be OK."

"Have you been taking the tablets?" enquires Cutler anxiously, come Monday, dismounting from his bicycle outside London Zoo. I nod serenely, and display for inspection my half-empty bottle of silver nitrate. Cutler packs his bicycle pump into his satchel with the cautious yet satisfied air of a keeper teaching his favourite lion to jump through hoops.

"Would you consider yourself at all neurotic?" I venture, with hopefully adequate degrees of placidity. "I don't think I'm all that neurotic - I'm capable of being very sensible," replies Cutler, ritualistically moulding yellow earplugs in his palm, then reaching under his tweed cap to wiggle the plugs into place.

While Cutler's extreme sensitivity to noise is genuine (the regularly donates his royalties to the Noise Abatement Society), one suspects the earplugs also provide a welcome excuse for poking around inside his bodily orifices in public.

As poet, singer and humorist, in a career spanning four decades, Cutler, now aged 74, has made the bodily orifice his own. Never in fact has a writer so fully explored the nostril. "If your nose has more than two exits, there's something wrong, and you should block all the extra

ones, unless you're already using it as an ocarina," he advises in his latest book, CD and radio series, *A Wet Handle*.

Cutler fans will already be alert to the possibilities of an extraordinary nasal capability, however, through such surreal monologues as "Life in a Scotch Sitting Room". Here, remembering his Jewish Glasgow childhood, he recalls a game of make-believe seaside, where grandma pours treacle from jug to jug to evoke estuary waves, wee girls blow breezes in their brothers' faces, occasionally hitting them with flecks of salty spit to complete the illusion, and grandpa ceremoniously gives each boy three precious grains of sand to play with: "I used to be able to sniff them up one nostril, tilt my head and catch them out the other," the poet modestly informs me.

His nose is, if anything, more sensitive than his ears, and he has been known to leap from moving taxis upon the discovery of a sick-up air-freshener within the cab. Highly perfumed matrons, together with unusually pungent furniture polish, have driven him from his favourite capella concerts at St John's, Smith Square. Now, the concentration of "young foreign girls wearing what they think is a charming odour" often sends him fleeing from the Tate Gallery, where once he sat in peace writing his absurd epigrams.

"I think the neurotic bit of me comes from the desire for the attention I was deprived of early on," he admits, "ever since the birth of my kid brother, when I was three, and I was suddenly being ignored and not the centre of things."

Cutler has never really fitted in, from that time on. Unlike his brothers, he finally opted against becoming a doctor, passed some of the war as an RAF navigator before being dismissed for acute dreaminess, went to Rolls Royce, then settled down as a teacher. An unwilling disciplinarian, he finally cut his strap into 50 pieces, gave a morsel to each of his pupils, and set off to teach at AS Neill's experimental hippy academy, Summerhill.

"It didn't penetrate my conscious mind that I was a person of worth until the age of 42," he whispers dolefully, constantly toying a shaky tightrope between self-admiration and abject insecurity. "Though I know very well intellectually why I am a person of worth. My career makes it patent."

His creative career started in the late Fifties, on the old Home Service, and the popular peak-hour radio show, *Monday Night at Home*. As Ivor Cutler of Y-hup, Oblique Musical Philosopher, accompanied by the baleful groan of his pedal-driven harmonium, he recounted with grave deliberation tales of suburban coughing competitions and grandmothers who bit the buttocks off cinema seats.

"Because of all the people who hated what I did, they only had me three weeks out of every four," Cutler explains.

Feelings about Cutler's work are still so radically polarised, in fact, that people have apparently been known to bring their fiancées to concerts, only to cancel the vicar in horror when they discover that their intendeds are immune to his sense of the ridiculous, missing the profundity beneath the veneer of puerility.

"Lots of people are unable to like what I do, so I am seen by them as a pain in the neck. They just don't know what I'm on about. That's fine and I certainly don't feel diminished by it, because the people who do enjoy what I do really enjoy it and feel well fed by it."

"Oh dear, crumbs. I see myself as the little boy in 'The Emperor's New Clothes' who points out the emperor is naked," he suggests, blue eyes sparkling. "When I sing a dirty song, I look at any old people in the audience - they're usually charmed. They're used to young people being embarrassed and not saying things in front of them, so they're very grateful."

Younger audiences, on the other hand, can be shocked and sternly disapproving of the eroticism dripping from Cutler's prim paterfamilial tongue: "You are perfect. You hold all the

qualities that I admire and respect. I want to sit on your skin and enjoy myself squashing hard against you, then peeling myself off slowly, like velcro. Now, what can I do to give you pleasure?"

"I quite like my own poetry. There are lots of laughs in it for me," he adds, suppressing a smutty titter.

Fellow fans ranged from Bertrand Russell to the Beatles. Cutler acquired new fame as bus-driver Buster Bloodvessel in *The Magical Mystery Tour*, was adopted by Radio 1 DJs John Peel and Andy Kershaw, and now the Septuagenarian Scot has been taken up by Oasis's record label Creation. He once toured (in earplugs) with Van Morrison, but has a dislike for vulgarly decorated hotel rooms, so paid fourpence every night to sleep in the nearest station waiting-room. Performing with the Gallaghers is therefore unlikely.

Sartorially, Cutler is as singular as any pop star. Every walk through London is his own performance. Today, he is soberly attired in plus-twos (from Harrods), his cap strudded with ladybirds. On more buoyant days, however, you might meet him buying goats' cheese in Selfridges food hall, in flamingo-pink shorts, with a christmas decoration as a tie; or perhaps you'll spot him in the Royal Festival Hall foyer, a sunflower in his buttonhole, fragile wisps of cloud-white hair emerging from an embroidered fez.

"I am really only finding ways of filling in the time between getting up in the morning and going to bed at night, but, oh how lucky I am!" he starts excitedly, from the drift of existentialist melancholia. "I should be at home now watching the telly - that's what you'd expect of a man of my august age."

"I'm a man who's very lonely for certain types of communication. A lot of people in that position turn to religion," he ponders, lips crumpling upwards with a mischievous twinkle.

Fishing inside his pocket, he suddenly brings out an abundant fistful of



The Cutler cult: a man 'lonely for certain types of communication' John Lawrence

impromptu presents: squares of dark chocolate, a glass tube of glistening splintered opals, and a stack of teeny stickers.

"Funny Smell", "Befriend a Bacterium", "Let me out", "To remove this label take it off"... Cutler became hooked on sticky labels in 1964, and has been cutting across the city's bitter loneliness, pressing them into the hands of strangers ever since.

"The idea that black marks on a small piece of paper can bring such delight to a person... when I see their

face suddenly break into a smile, I feel very blessed."

'A Wet Handle', the book, is published by Arc Publications, Nunholme Mill, Shaw Wood Rd, Todmorden, Lancs OL14 6DA. 'A Wet Handle', the CD, is on the Creation label. 'A Wet Handle', the radio series, begins tonight at 8.30pm on Radio 3. Ivor Cutler appears as part of Laurie Anderson's Meltdown at the QEH / RFH2, SBC, London SE1, at 7.45pm on Monday 23 June (Booking: 0171-960 4242)

Tomorrow in the Tabloid: Tom Lubbock on the Fernand Léger retrospective in Paris and Richard Ingleby on the Royal Academy Summer Show



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Sixty-five going on six

Despite her awesome reputation, Samuel Beckett's conduit says she still feels like a frightened little girl inside. By Janie Lawrence

When Billie Whitelaw was summoned to Buckingham Palace to collect her CBE, she was so frightened that as the Queen struggled to fix the pin on to her lapel, she couldn't say a word. Bold, strong Billie Whitelaw frightened? Frankly, after a few short minutes in her presence, I couldn't help feeling that meeting Billie Whitelaw is probably much scarier than no audience with the Queen.

Her large, penetrating green eyes don't miss a trick. You know from the off that if she can't be doing with something, you'll soon find out – not unlike the born-again, downtrodden Lily, whom she plays in *Born to Run*, BBC1's current Sunday-night drama series.

But most awesome is her long association with the playwright Samuel Beckett. Ah yes, Billie Whitelaw was suffering for her art way before De Niro and co went on their first Method diet. For Beckett's *Happy Days*, she allowed herself to be buried up to her chest in mud. For *Play*, her face was smothered with glue and paraffin. For the 1972 production of *Not I*, she was deprived

of her. "I used to have dreadful stage fright. I was always frightened of letting everyone else down. I had an inferiority complex, which I doubtless still have. When you get real stage fright, it comes like a sledgehammer out of the blue in the middle of something that you know you've done too many times before, and there's no rhyme or reason for it. It's something quite different from being nervous. It's almost paralysing." Has she any idea what brought this about? "I'm sure a psychiatrist would be able to explain that easily to you," she says dismissively. It's hard to tell whether Billie Whitelaw simply isn't given to excessive self-analysis, or whether she's simply an expert at the polite but firm deflection of unwanted questions. "After Beckett, I said, 'Why am I still doing this? All those clichés about the confidence of youth are true. When you are older, you know how far short of what it could be you are.'"

She remains a very attractive woman. Slim, with a mane of tousled shoulder-length ash-blond hair, she is remarkably sexy. When I tell her this, she comes over all flustered. "I really should try to do some exercise. Darling, I'm so lazy," she prattles in that ill-at-ease way of someone embarrassed by compliments. She looks particularly good in *Born to Run*. It's a wonderfully witty script and she gives a bravura performance as the downtrodden Lily, married to a loathsome, domineering businessman. I don't expect that

The Monday Interview

BILLIE WHITELAW

of sight and sound and strapped into a head vice.

These are the actions of an actress who has pushed herself to the limits of emotional and physical endurance. A quick curtsy in Buckingham Palace sounds like a doddle by comparison. I wonder what's left for her to be genuinely and deeply scared of. Death? "Oh, no. Death's not one of those things that frighten the life out of me," she booms, in a voice that is pure "theatre" threaded with a tamed but residual Northern inflection. "Getting up on stage with the curtain going up frightens me more." Anything else?

"I very often wake up at two in the morning with my stomach going over. Sometimes it's difficult to work out why – it's all the things you've put to one side during the day." On these insomnia nights, she usually heads straight for the fridge and pours herself a flute of champagne.

Hers was not a childhood punctuated by the popping of corks. She was born in Coventry, and her impoverished family was evacuated during the war. When Billie was 10, her father, a Liverpool electrician, died of bone cancer. "I used to go to bed every night saying, 'Please God, let Daddy be dead in the morning. It was awful listening to him crying out in pain.' After that, the young Billie developed a stutter, and her mother enrolled her into a drama group at the Bradford Civic Playhouse to help boost her confidence. Before long, she was a regular performer on BBC North's *Children's Hour*. Now 65, she says that the same stuttering Northern girl still lurks underneath. "It's something I haven't come to terms with. I'm rather ashamed of having the good life I have."

After working with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, she joined the National Theatre under Laurence Olivier, playing Desdemona to his Othello. Since then, there have been innumerable television appearances and many films. She has worked with the highest and the best, including Marcello Mastroianni – "a great character too"; and Albert Finney, who must have been even more charming. Well, they did have a romance. "A mild affair – we'd known each other for donkey's years." More recently, she has played Reg and Ronnie's mother in *The Krays*, and the nanny from hell in *The Omen*.

Yet it is her long collaboration with Beckett that has attracted curiosity and incredulity in equal measure. Did she love him?

'I can't remember when I had such fun in a role, but for me, at my age, to be rogered over the bonnet of a Jaguar ...'

"Without question, of course I did. We had enormous empathy. When he died, I didn't realise what an amputation it would be. Three months afterwards, my heart started to behave like a fish that was leaping around in my rib cage. "So she must have had a strong idea of what made him tick? "I didn't need to," she retorts briskly. "I wasn't very interested in that. We talked and had coffee and wandered about."

These days, she doesn't do any theatre. Her last live performance was in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* 10 years ago. But it's not because she's not asked. Peter Hall, among others, has entreated her to work, but oo. Fear of stage fright got the bet-

ter of her. "I used to have dreadful stage fright. I was always frightened of letting everyone else down. I had an inferiority complex, which I doubtless still have. When you get real stage fright, it comes like a sledgehammer out of the blue in the middle of something that you know you've done too many times before, and there's no rhyme or reason for it. It's something quite different from being nervous. It's almost paralysing." Has she any idea what brought this about? "I'm sure a psychiatrist would be able to explain that easily to you," she says dismissively. It's hard to tell whether Billie Whitelaw simply isn't given to excessive self-analysis, or whether she's simply an expert at the polite but firm deflection of unwanted questions. "After Beckett, I said, 'Why am I still doing this? All those clichés about the confidence of youth are true. When you are older, you know how far short of what it could be you are.'"

She remains a very attractive woman. Slim, with a mane of tousled shoulder-length ash-blond hair, she is remarkably sexy. When I tell her this, she comes over all flustered. "I really should try to do some exercise. Darling, I'm so lazy," she prattles in that ill-at-ease way of someone embarrassed by compliments. She looks particularly good in *Born to Run*. It's a wonderfully witty script and she gives a bravura performance as the downtrodden Lily, married to a loathsome, domineering businessman. I don't expect that

Billie Whitelaw has ever been a doormat. "No, I've sometimes thought I've been one, but that's only because I'm theatrical and dramatic." After Lily's husband has a heart attack, she undergoes a Shirley Valentine-type transformation, leaving him in intensive care while she jets off to Tenerife, to return a changed woman. All theatrical and dramatic, in fact. "I can't remember when I had such fun in a role, but for me, at my age, to be rogered over the bonnet of a Jaguar ... I said to John McCord, 'I don't know how the hell to do this.' I thought it would be acutely embarrassing, but he was so gentle." Her own marriage to the writer Robert Muller, now 70, is an extremely happy one. She twice left her first husband, the actor Peter Vaughan, but went back because she didn't want to make him miserable. "Finally, he left me – that was the joke," she comments drily. Subsequently, she met Robert and reckons that within 48 hours she knew he was "the one". "I've never been in love with Robert – I love him; I think one is in love with lovers. I looked at this man and I looked at that incredible cranium ... Excuse me – cranium? She carries on blithely, "and I thought, 'Yes, this is different to any other relationship.' I've over had. I have a feeling that part of that was that I wanted him to be the father of my child. He had a blinding intelligence, an incredible ability to listen and he was totally reliable. I had a number of boyfriends and I had to say, 'I've met someone. I can't explain it but this is different. Glad you're in town, let's go and have a drink, but that's it.'"

They are, she says, totally devoted to each other. "I know my life will be with Robert until the day I die." In the one direct parallel with Lily, Whitelaw has also been a frequent visitor to the intensive-care unit. Robert suffered a heart attack in 1982 and has recently undergone triple-bypass surgery. "He's doing very well now; he'll outlive me," she says breezily – more breezily than you suspect she feels, but in a tone that won't brook any more enquiries. She prefers to sing his praises. "Intellectually, he has made me very lazy, because he has a fine mind which devours books in three different languages. Socially, he's incredible. He phrases things in this Wildean witty way and it's staggering to behold."

But she is plainly no doddard herself. She is actively involved in an organisation that campaigns for victims of torture, and two years ago she wrote her autobiography – *Billie Whitelaw... Who He?* Yet for one who appears the mistress of fluid speech, she claims that she is hopeless socially. "I do talk a lot – far more than my husband – but I'm not good at talking to a lot of people. I either talk a lot of rubbish – which I'm sure I do a lot of the time anyway – or I stare at the soup. I'm no good at social presentation. It's what in the North they call being blunt but straight, and what my charming continental husband calls being bloody rude."

Suddenly, she breaks off. "I was going to say I must stop talking about myself, but, of course, you're interviewing me." Such minor outbursts of endearing business also crop up whenever you ask her to put a date to something. When, for instance, did she film *Born to Run*? "Oh, I don't know, sometimes it was cold, sometimes it was warm."

Some people, of course, might say that it was the ultimate sign of battiness to contemplate suicide when her son, Matthew, was



'I'm no good at social presentation,' says Billie Whitelaw. 'It's what in the North they call being blunt but straight, and what my charming continental husband calls being bloody rude' Photograph: John Minihan

taken very ill as a small child. He had meningitis and was given only two days to live. "For me, it was absolutely logical," she insists. Did she tell Robert at the time? "No, no, no, no, no." What did he say when she did tell him? "I can't remember; it was something I'd just have done. It was purely a practical step, it wasn't like a suicide, boo hoo hoo. Not 'How awful, my son's going to die. How dreadful, I can't live without him.' I thought, 'As he's so little I don't want him to get lost, so I'd better plan it that if he does die I can go with him.' " Nowadays, 29-year-old Matt is very much alive and kicking, and she is the proud "Nana" to 18-month-old Sam.

Home is now a cottage in the country, which she found when she was feeling a bit disgruntled one weekend and took herself off for a drive. "Even when it rains up there, the earth smells beautiful. It's every foreigner's idea of idyllic, unspoilt English countryside. The first thing I heard when I went there was insects – I hadn't heard insects buzzing for too many years. I wander round the garden and I commune with the pheasants and the rabbits and I encourage all the birds."

If truth be told, it can take quite a prod to halt her regular odes to huculic living. She is visibly shocked when I tell her I hate birds and am jolly glad that we're sitting in a Hampstead restaurant, a stone's throw from her London pied à terre, rather than eyeball to eyeball with roving pheasants. "Nature is the only thing that makes sense to me," she explains in hushed, almost reverential tones. Apparently, if Robert's away, there is even more communing, because then she'll go for three days at a time without speaking to a soul. "I'll sit in my garden and watch the leaves fall off the trees. I've always loved the country. During my childhood, you could see Ilkley Moor from our window, and the garden was like a bit of field wired off."

When she leaves the countryside, it's normally to take her one-woman lecture tours on Beckett to the States. "I suppose I have to come clean and call it lecturing. But it sounds too grand. I chatterbox – a cross between chatting and performing. I've got nothing written down, so I never do the same thing twice." As someone who suffers from stage fright, does she carry copious notes? "No, I've got it all up here." She taps her head. "There's no way I can dry up, because I'll just think of something else to say. All I've got to do is think what Beckett and I did next."

She believes that everything else she has undertaken since Beckett has never quite measured up. "Perhaps it sounds like false modesty, but I know I could have done far more with my acting life than I have. I'm not a great planner so I'm apt to bob along like a piece of driftwood; it sounds like terrible arrogance, but I do think that I have deliberately put a brake on things I think I could do. I had a collaboration with Beckett; I was a conduit for him. But I've never really felt like a proper actress."

"I still feel like that six-year-old girl who was frightened when the bombs were raining down out of the sky in Coventry." Or the little girl whose nerves sent her racing to the lavatory bowl to be sick when she was doing *Children's Hour*. That certainly isn't the impression she creates. Has she ever been told that she is, well, a bit frightening? "Yes, I was absolutely astonished," she retorts. With that, she summons a waiter and asks for the remains of the salmon to be put into a doggie bag. "I can't bear waste; it comes from being a war baby," she declares. The waiter, quite overawed, is back within seconds.

'Born to Run' continues on Sundays, BBC1, 9.35pm. Deborah Ross is on holiday.

More than just a passing phase

You knew you'd picked a good night by the quality of the audience. Half of London's modern dance establishment was at The Place on Saturday to pay tribute to one of the queens of European dance. If you didn't know them all by sight, you could identify them by the fact that they view the proceedings with their wise old heads on one side. Like deaf budgies.

Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker hadn't danced in London for over 10 years and no one had any intention of missing it. De Keersmaeker and Michèle Anne Bovy first performed *Fase* in 1982 and it set the Belgian choreographer's style: spare but flavourous, the resemblance to Lucinda Childs's austere minimalist is unmistakable but with one significant difference: you don't need a small rusty nail embedded into your palm in order to stay awake through it. The injection of an

DANCE

Fase
The Place,
London

intangible strain of drama into De Keersmaeker's mesmerising repetitions renders them a stimulant rather than a sedative. "Piano Fase", the first of the four subtly interconnected sections danced to the insistent strains of Steve Reich consists of the two women standing upstage against a white backdrop. They are dressed in simple shifts, nurse white shoes and ankle socks and their hair is bobbed and pinned with a chastening lack of nonsense. Their slithering feet make repeated 180 degree turns along an imaginary axis, one arm swinging free, eyes carefully "spotting" to prevent gid-

diness as they spin and spin and spin. Done with a completely deadpan expression, this could easily turn into a hit of a sheep audit but the *shy smiling pair* execute each whirling half turn with a strangely melodramatic air as if forever turning back from the door to deliver a crushing exit line.

For the second section, "Come Out", they change into shiny black boots, skirts and chinos. The soundtrack, stuck in a groove of dialogue, creates a hand-jiving repeat for the two seated women whose flickering speed alternates with startling freeze-frame pauses. As the stuttering phrase of sound corrupts and decays with repetition, so the stock phrases of dance and gesture begin to break up and degenerate.

The third section, "Violin phase", is a solo for the 36-year-old De Keersmaeker which modifies the swivelling moves of the opening segment but enacts them around the

perimeter of a large pool of light. Her curious twisting step carries her to the centre of the circle then back to one of the little spots marked on the circumference as if she were playing a complicated game of clock patience. The half-turns continue as her flailing leg conducts a punishing sequence of *grands battements*.

The work concludes with "Clapping music" in which the women march on the spot in profile. They bounce through the speedy and exhausting routine with an elastic gait and an embezzlement that causes them to spring on to the points of their sneakers every few beats, arms swinging forward to aid and prolong the manoeuvre. They end downstage in a white tank of light to an explosion of adoring applause having delivered an exhilarating reminder that "new" dance needn't have been born yesterday.

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the leader page

Why the Civil Service needs a political élite

When Harold Wilson entered Downing Street in 1964, he took Marcia Williams with him. And that was that. It was not until the following year that he hired a press secretary, one Gerald Kaufman. Mrs Williams, now Baroness Falkender, was, as she claimed the other day, "Jonathan Powell, Peter Maudelson, Anji Hunter and Alastair Campbell rolled into one". And a few more besides, she was too modest to mention. Sally Morgan has inherited her formal title of political secretary, and Tony Blair has brought at least another 20 staff from outside into his office.

This has thrown the Civil Service top brass into a harrumph. A chap called Sir Michael Betts, of whom we had not previously heard but whose job is apparently to safeguard the integrity of public servants, warned against politicising Whitehall. Funny we did not hear from him in nearly two decades of Conservative rule. The issue is broader than that of Mr Blair's office, since Labour has drafted in a whole fleet of temporary civil servants across all government ministries, mostly from shadow cabinet offices but also from the party's Millbank Tower election headquarters and the private sector. The number of "special advisers" (party-political appointees in civil service jobs) is claimed to have broken the limits set by the previous government. To which the response ought to be not instant condemnation

but to ask, are those limits right? Meanwhile, attention has focused on the case of Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair's "chief of staff", who was going to become the Prime Minister's private secretary. This is an important post, and it has always been occupied by a civil servant. Again, we should not throw up our hands in reflex horror but ask, is that right?

In both cases, the answer is no. The new government was elected to make (limited) changes and it should not be denied the tools to get on with the job. The idea that incoming ministers should abandon the infrastructure which supported them as they made their plans for running the country, at the very moment that they start doing it, is frankly outdated. The limits on special advisers should be relaxed so that new ministers can both bring their teams with them and advisers from wherever they see fit.

As for Mr Powell, it is essential that he should be the Prime Minister's private secretary – and it is disappointing that Mr Blair seems to have retreated on the matter of job titles. There will, as we report today, continue to be both a private secretary (career bureaucrat) and a chief of staff (Mr Powell). What is important is that Mr Powell should be, if not in name at least in reality, the interface between the PM and the Civil Service. Peter Hennessy, a constitutional historian normally much admired by this newspaper, argues: "It is vital that this post is occupied by a thoroughly



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independent figure and not some wholly politicised satrap." But, with the respect that is due, that is a pile of satrap. A "thoroughly independent" figure like Mr Powell's brother Sir Charles, perhaps, who was Margaret Thatcher's private secretary? The idea that Sir Charles suppressed his personal view of, say, European monetary union, while offering "disinterested" advice can only be believed by higher theologians of bureaucratic mysticism.

According to Professor Hennessy, the PM's private secretary "is responsible for handling all security intelligence, advice on the honours list and dealings with

Buckingham Palace". So what? The last person Mr Blair needs when it comes to abolishing knighthoods, for example, is some career civil servant suffering the etiquette equivalent of foot-blinding.

Of course, there are limits. There are some ideals of the British civil service tradition which must be defended or even restored. The culture of the clever but neutral public servant is a valuable one. Civil servants ought to be able to offer unwelcome advice – or to blow the whistle on ministerial wrongdoing – without fear for their prospects. Although we did not see much of the mythical independence of the service in such matters as

the sale of arms to Iraq or the Tisdall and Posing affairs. Above all, the concept of recruitment and promotion on merit is a bulwark against cronyism and corruption. What ought to be made clearer, however, is that it must accommodate a political command structure at the top to allow government to govern.

The diaries of the Wilson era make it plain how poorly prepared Labour ministers were in the Sixties, and how the few plans they had were often frustrated by determined civil service resistance. Mrs Williams fought a running battle against the bureaucratic machine which sought total control over the Prime Minister's personal space.

None of that applies this time. Clearly some senior panjandrum have had their noses put out of joint by the arrival of large numbers of extrajudicially young staff. But it is quite obvious that, at more junior levels, most civil servants are delighted to have a new government. So Mr Blair does not need to impose a tier of his political appointees in order to police obstreperous jobsworths. But it is a good idea, with caveats, if only because Labour developed in opposition many of the skills that a modern government needs. Next to the technology of Peter Mandelson's "war room" in the election campaign, much of the Civil Service seems to be still in the steam age.

The caveats are that the boundaries between political and civil service appointments must be clearly drawn, and

that there should be no increase in the amount of taxpayers' money used to pay for political appointees. As Lady Falkender evocatively observed, Mr Blair's office in opposition was "awash with money", and no doubt much of that money will be used to pay for the growth of staff numbers at 10 Downing Street. Provided it is raised in an open way, this is a positive good. It will help sweep away the stuffy, conservative culture of the higher civil service exemplified by one retiring mandarin who commented to Sir Edward Bridges that what he had learnt from his experience was "to distinguish between various shades of grey".

They should try Pierre pressure

As we now find ourselves ahead of the French, by a quirk of history, here is a word or two of advice for the incoming government in Paris. First, put off all that stuff about the single European currency and devalue the franc so that *tout l'Islington* can have a bon holiday this year. Second, get that Lionel Jospin off to the nearest Pierre Mandelson so that he can look a bit more the part. And third, get a grip on your cheese industry, because we are overtaking you in that section of the food hall, as well.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Britain's bright future in Europe

Sir: The Europe 97 campaign is a welcome and timely reminder of the crucial importance of Europe in British life. Culturally, economically, and politically, Britain and the British people have gained greatly from membership of the European Union.

Contact with other European cultures has enriched the cultural life of Britain, just as the British contribution has been important to other European countries. From cinema to sport, fashion to music, literature and art, the benefits of this European cross-fertilisation are apparent. We believe that to turn our backs on Europe now would be to set our faces against both the lessons of history and the best prospects for our future.

As with culture, so with business and politics. The vast majority of business-people and politicians know that Britain's future prosperity can only be secured as a full and enthusiastic member of the European Union. Millions of jobs in this country, as well as most of our inward investment, now depend on our close links with other European countries.

No one should forget what came before the European Union. It has risen from the ashes of a continent devastated by the worst conflicts in our history. Since then, the European Union has helped heal the wounds of war and introduced a new era of peace, co-operation and prosperity. Britain's future does indeed lie at the heart of Europe.

Sir DAVID PUTNAM
BRIAN ALDISS
Sir TERENCE CONRAN
FRANCES FYFIELD
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MICHAEL IGNATIEFF
EDDIE IZZARD
KATRINA AND THE WAVES
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Sir EVELYN DE ROTHCHILD
Sir PETER USTINOV
MINETTE WALTERS
RICHARD WILSON
London SW1

New plans needed for the South-west

Sir: David Walker ("In Search of a Bigger Splash", 29 May) is right to say that two into seven won't go: Devon and Cornwall can't be squeezed into the seven-county development agency proposed for the South-west. The rural deprivation of Cornwall cannot be compared with the prosperous commuter belts of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire – the challenges and opportunities we face are entirely different.

However, Mr Walker is wrong to say that the political community in Cornwall and Devon is asleep to the problem we face. Liberal Democrats from across the two counties have long campaigned for better infrastructure – upgrading of the Penzance-London main line and development of Falmouth harbour, to name but two examples. The problem is not lack of will, or a hostility to economic growth, but fragmentation of effort. Devon and Cornwall are plagued by a plethora of different agencies – new plans must unite these bodies, not add to them. For that reason it is to be regretted that local government reorganisation did not stretch to unitary status for Cornwall.

Now Labour must recognise that Devon and Cornwall are special



cases. Many would argue that they are too disparate to share one agency, although close co-operation and co-ordination would always be necessary. To those who say this would be too localised a unit, I would point out that the successful Highlands and Islands Enterprise Scheme covers a population considerably smaller than that of Cornwall.

Whatever the solution, the seven-county model is a non-starter. It will be resisted tooth and nail by the people of the South-west – John Prescott should rule it out today. ROBIN TEVERSON MEP (Cornwall and West Plymouth, Lib Dem) Callington, Cornwall

Sir: It would be nonsense to create a development agency by combining Truro with Cheltenham and Bournemouth, in the DoE's single mega-region of the South-west. But it is equally unsound to assume, as David Walker does, that "Greater Exeter" should be forced into the same pot with Plymouth – or Glasgow with Edinburgh, Coventry with Birmingham, Liverpool with Manchester, Swansea with Cardiff. These are all distinctive city trading systems, each with its own sphere of economic influence.

Cities are trading systems, at the heart of all business. As the cities go, so goes the nation. And that's the crux. The UK consists of 40 or so "city economies", which are in healthy competition with each other. They are the true building-blocks of our diverse "national economy" and the real source of the grass-roots energy for which David Walker is searching.

Labour's regional development agencies are a move in the right direction: but rather than assume

Keeping faith within reason

Sir: Matthew Kalman (Faith and Reason, 31 May) protests too much. There is no objection to the freedom of Jews (or any other group) practising their religious (or any other) customs, provided they don't violate the freedom of others. What is objectionable is expecting us to accept practices which are unacceptable in themselves, like infant circumcision or ritual slaughter, or which interfere with other people, like *any* markers and sabbath observance. Jews who wish to keep the sabbath may reasonably demand that other people should allow them to do so, but not that other people should make special allowances to help them to do so.

There are similar problems with some Hindu or Muslim or Christian customs. We all have conflicts between our principles as individuals and our membership of the community, and we sometimes have to compromise the former to continue the latter. A multi-cultural community doesn't have

to welcome every custom just because it is practised by a particular culture. NICOLAS WALTER
Nationalist Press Association
London N1

Weak links in the political chain

Sir: As an MEP for a single-member constituency, Michael Elliott (Letters, 29 May) understandably defends the close link that MPs and MEPs supposedly have with their constituents. Putting aside the fact that three of his fellow UK MEPs are elected by a form of proportional representation – the three elected by STV in Ulster, where there is a much higher Euro-turnout – Mr Elliott seeks to perpetuate an argument for which there is little evidence. Most people do not know the name of their own MP, let alone their MEP, and this number has probably substantially increased with the high turnover in the election.

Furthermore, would a Conservative voter really have a close link with his MP in a Labour stronghold, or vice versa? Would even a Thatcherite in Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir Edward Heath's seat) or a Blairite in Chesterfield (Tony Benn's seat) feel a close affinity with his MP? The fact that many Conservative MPs in supposedly safe seats were defeated at the election just goes to show that the link is rather weak and volatile.

Mr Elliott is right to criticise impersonal list systems, but what is needed is a new electoral system that retains the tradition of constituency-based representation and gives real voter choice, for elections both to the House of Commons and the European Parliament. MATTHEW SEWARD
Director, SW19

Too much traffic

Sir: Your leading article ("Take a new route with the old car problem", 31 May) is right to point out that we need more than "awareness raising" to deal with the many problems associated with increasing traffic. One of the most fundamental ways to do this is to tackle traffic growth itself. Later this summer a Private Members' Bill – drafted by Friends of the Earth, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party – will be introduced to Parliament by Cynog Dafis MP. The Bill sets national targets for reducing traffic: a 5 per cent reduction by 2005 and 10 per cent by 2010, based on 1990 figures. The Bill already has the support of a considerable number of MPs from all parties.

We very much hope that the Government – and indeed all MPs – will support this vital Bill which will tackle the very root of the problem: too much traffic. TONY JUMPER
Campaigns Director
Friends of the Earth
London N1

Polar achievement to be proud of

Sir: Paul Vallety, in "Secrets of a holiday on ice" (29 May), has missed the point of the women's polar relay – to demonstrate that people from non-expedition backgrounds (unlike Rebecca Stephens or Robert Swan), with limited time and financial resources (in this case two or three weeks each and £1,500, not £15,000 as he suggests), who have the determination, can do something outside of the ordinary. No other country managed to field enough women with sufficient pluck and determination to undertake such a task. It should be regarded as another fine polar achievement, certainly not in the same heroic league as Shackleton, Scott or Fiennes, but enough to make us proud to be British. JULIAN HANSON-SMITH
Oakham Rutland

Camelot cats deserve cream

Sir: Camelot management are entitled to earn a lot for being successful at something requiring skill and effort, not just good luck ("Humbly must not lay low the Kingdom of Camelot", 31 May). Those in government who are now agitated on this issue should reflect that if they are as good at their jobs as Camelot managers have been at theirs, British government will be exceptionally well run. PETER MITCHELL
London SW79

Of lions, foxes and men

Sir: Glen Newey asks (30 May) why we should "worry more about the morality of eating meat than lions do". The simple answer is: because there are nearly six billion of us, increasing by a quarter of a million a day, whereas there are only a few tens of thousands of lions.

Already we have destroyed half the world's forests to make room for grazing and crops (more than half of which are fed to domestic animals) and we have reduced the oceans' fish stocks to levels that may not be sustainable.

If the population nearly doubles in the next 50 years, as forecast, there simply are not the resources to enable most of us to go on eating large quantities of meat. People can be healthy and active consuming little or no animal protein, and we have neither the metabolism nor the physiology of carnivores, so we had better learn to live differently from lions. P J STEWART
Oxford

Sir: I can't agree with Glen Newey when he says that the most compelling argument against fox-hunting is its lamentable inefficiency. Sometimes inefficiency is good.

God help the fox if we use modern, efficient methods on it. In 1949 alone, the Ministry of Agriculture sold 175,000lbs of subsidised cyanide to farmers and landowners for gassing foxes, badgers and rabbits before that solution was discontinued.

Hunting is just efficient enough to keep foxes controlled but still in the picture. What's more, it's conspicuous (even from the air) and therefore controllable. That's how Glen Newey's "oafs in pink" want it, and that's how I want it, because I rather like having foxes around. NIGEL BURKE
London SE13

Poets and artists can be bedfellows

Sir: Not all poets read well in public, and not all artists make performances, but thank God some do, as clearly not all journalists write with clarity. Ruth Padel ("Exhibit A: pretension", 28 May) seems to want it both ways – artists should remain mum, but poetry readings can be performance material.

This tired pulling of the covers over to one's own side of the bed regresses to the same divisive opposition of word and image of which Padel accuses the Science Museum; it pits artist against poet in a manner which I am certain is as embarrassing for the poet Selima Hill as it is for the artist Brian Culling. Padel's little diatribe against artists reeks of a conservative populism and an alarming anti-intellectualism by which no true poet would accept to be defended. MARTHA FLEMING
London W9

Elland Road and the kung fu king

Sir: David Aaronovitch claims that the "Ooh-ah Cantonal" phrase was invented and chanted by the fans at Old Trafford (30 May). Tell that to the 35,000 amassed Leeds United fans who were chanting this at Elland Road, over a year before the kung fu king was a passing glint in Alex Ferguson's eye. JAMIE TUDOR
Nottingham

Single mothers should rejoice

Labour's plan is not a threat, says Polly Toynbee, but the promise of something better

Is Tony Blair making a threat or a promise to single parents? After last week's Clinton visit, some right-wing commentators hope they read in his words a hint that we are about to enter the tough, mean world of the new American welfare system. They lick their lips with glee as they look across the Atlantic where large numbers of the poor are being thrown off welfare with as yet unknown consequences, single mothers get no extra money for babies born on welfare, and no one can claim benefit for more than five years over a lifetime. How they rejoiced at imagined signs that Blair's rhetoric mirrored Clinton's.

This is utter bunk. Blair's plans for single mothers are nothing new. Harriet Harman outlined them publicly long before the election – including in interviews with this columnist. And it was written into the manifesto. It is not a threat. It is an important promise.

This summer 12 pilot projects called Parent Plus begin. All single parents with school-age children in pilot areas will be invited to JobCentre interviews. Currently more than a million single parents drawing benefit costing £10bn are never even asked if they want help to find work. Five hundred thousand have school-age children, yet all they receive is a letter once every three years checking their address. In some pilots there will be new after-school and holiday childcare, in others there is none, so that the cost-effectiveness of each scheme can be compared.

No one is talking about compelling them to do anything, and reports that Frank Field has been arguing in the Welfare to Work Committee for a big stick are just not true. No one who has looked at the research thinks it necessary. Most single mothers say they want to work but are caught by the benefits and childcare trap. Fewer British single mothers work than in any other European country.

What will happen in these interviews? Single mothers will be asked,

Why, for 18 years, did the Tories do nothing but berate them?

nicely, if there is anything they need to help them. If they are not ready for work at once, they will be offered the chance of joining in voluntary work or taking a course at a local college. They might be encouraged to help with reading in their local school just to help get them back into the mainstream world.

The hope is that these interviews will create a huge climate of change. There are plenty of part-time jobs for women and, apart from childcare, no real obstacles to getting them work, topped up with family credit. This is all carrot and no stick.

Experts estimate that it will be far easier to get these women into work than tackling the 250,000 unemployed young people, who are often jobless because they have deep-seated problems: many are from care, with mental and addiction problems or criminal records. Many are profoundly illiterate and innumerate. Single mothers are a far better bet.

One piece of research published recently by David Stanton of the DSS shows the alarming cycle of very young single mothers whose daughters also become teenage mothers. But he showed how this deadly pattern can be broken: when single mothers go out to work their daughters are far less likely to get pregnant young. This makes sense, as young girls with youngish mothers at home have someone to help them bring up a baby. But if their mothers are out at work they know they will have to manage all on their own.

The mystery is why, for 18 years, the last government did nothing but berate single mothers. The Tories were partly constrained by a strong moral lobby that thought it wrong for mothers to work. However, leaving single mothers to fester on benefits while the great majority of married mothers work was an odd way to promote family values.

The windfall levy and possibly the lottery will help to fund the new after-school childcare schemes. Caring for school-age children for a few extra hours a day is relatively cheap at under £20 a week, compared with the phenomenally high cost of crèches for the very young. If the Parent Plus pilots pay the expected rich early dividends, there will be pressure to put more emphasis on single mothers than on the young unemployed. There is, however, a problem: single mothers are not registered unemployed, and so do not fall within the 250,000 target Labour has promised.

As for the alarm bells that may be set ringing by Tony Blair's speech today, single mothers have nothing to fear. They are not about to be punished because compulsory work schemes would cost a fortune. Whatever ambiguous language Tony Blair may use, his initiative is the best possible news for single mothers.



Asylum seekers need a helping hand

by Patricia Wynn Davies

The Government is already moving towards meeting its manifesto pledge to review the most arbitrary features of the immigration and asylum laws. But one glaringly arbitrary and harsh legacy of the Tories deserves special scrutiny. The question for the responsible ministers is this: could you look after yourself on £24 a week? That is the kind of sum a destitute asylum seeker who does not seek refugee status at the port of entry must live on.

The idea of withdrawing income support and housing benefit from this group was ostensibly to deter those who did not have a genuine fear of persecution from fleeing to Britain. It is impossible to prove whether the change has had this effect. There was a big fall in asylum applications in 1996, but that may simply be because Britain, and Europe generally, are increasingly seen as resistant to pleas for help from genuine refugees. The new rules, implemented last August, may mean more people risk their lives by staying in brutal regimes.

The plain fact, as successful cases show, is that some genuine asylum seekers will always fail to apply for refugee status at their port of arrival through fear or ignorance. Take, for example, a 39-year-old Kenyan woman, who is afraid to be identified and who asks to be called Jackie. She is confined to a wheelchair following a particularly brutal spell in police custody in Nairobi during which she was raped repeatedly and pushed down a flight of stairs.

Jackie has been given a 10ft by 10ft room in a bed and breakfast hotel in east London, plus £24 a week to pay for the necessities of life. Her local authority has to provide this following a High Court ruling last October. The finding, upheld by the Court of Appeal in February, was that the 1948 National Assistance Act requires councils to provide single adult asylum seekers with the basic means of survival. Jackie has no cooking facilities. Any food must be frozen convenience food which can be reheated in a microwave. She gets some help from meals on wheels but frequently falls back on microwaved jacket potatoes. She misses some meals altogether.

Because of her disability, Jackie suffers a multitude of other difficulties. Dial-a-Ride is her passport to life outside the room, but it costs £1 a time. Its phone-line is constantly engaged and there are restrictions on the amount of time she can spend

on the phone at the hotel. Apart from visits to a disabled swimming club, arranged by a volunteer, she spends most of her time alone.

Jackie feared that if she sought asylum at the airport she would be sent home and so did not claim until a fortnight later. After nearly a year in the UK, she has yet to be interviewed about her application. She feels isolated and is under treatment for depression. "I don't think I have a future," she says. "I am in a strange land with not enough money to look after myself. I cannot walk. I cannot work. I have nothing to look forward to."

Erol Yesilyurt is her Turkish-born case worker at the Medical Foundation for the Care of

'The question to the responsible ministers is this: could you look after yourself on £24 a week?'

Victims of Torture in north London. He was accepted as a refugee nine years ago and is now a British citizen. Many of his clients suffer from serious depression. "Many people leave detention with a deep sense of helplessness," he said. "When they come to London, they come with hope. In this situation, they regain that sense of helplessness." Some of his clients receive almost no cash at all; some women struggle even to meet their sanitary needs.

Bujar (again not his real name), a 45-year-old Albanian who fled from the republic of Kosovo three weeks ago, is another of Mr Yesilyurt's clients. Ethnic Albanians have come under severe persecution in the Serb-occupied republic and he has deep and extensive scars on his head and hands after being tortured. "I was dead," he says. "I had to escape." There was no question of him claiming asylum at the port of arrival because he stayed away on lorries as they crossed Europe. He jumped from the last one in Bedfordshire and claimed asylum two weeks later. He lives in a bed and breakfast in north London which provides an evening meal, but he receives no money from

Westminster, the responsible council, The Medical Foundation has given him £30. Nobody knows what will happen when that runs out.

These are but two examples of widely differing provision by hard-pressed, mainly London, councils as they attempt to carry out the court judgments in relation to single adults and their duties under the Children Act for families with children and for unaccompanied children.

One central London council gives £18 a week plus food vouchers, while another gives £21.28 a week in cash. Another provides food at community centres but provides no money at all. In one case, a Sri Lankan torture victim receives less than £10 worth of food a week. In all, councils are obliged by the court rulings to help around 4,817 adults, 2,375 families and 526 unaccompanied children out of existing budgets. Some London councils plan to "export" asylum seekers to the north of England, where bed and breakfast accommodation is slightly cheaper. Westminster is negotiating for rooms in Liverpool hotels.

When cutting benefits for asylum seekers was first mooted, the then Secretary of State for Social Security, Peter Lilley, suggested that £200m a year might be saved. But the direct costs of the makeshift system the courts felt compelled to impose could be £50m for the first half-year of the new regime – leaving aside the indirect costs that might flow from ill-health. With most bed and breakfast hotel rooms costing councils well in excess of £100 a week, Mr Yesilyurt insists that current arrangements are unfair on both councils and clients. "Why," he asks, "not give people income support [£49.15 for those 25 or over] and let them claim housing benefit for a rented room costing £50 a week?"

Even if such savings as there may be could be justified, there are the wider moral and legal questions. In his Court of Appeal judgment in February, Lord Woolf, the Master of the Rolls, attacked the asylum policy's rationale. It was wrong, he insisted, to think that all claims not made upon arrival were bogus. As a matter of law, he argued that Parliament, in framing the 1948 National Assistance Act, had intended those in need to receive assistance.

Yet the legal rows continue, signs of a crumbling, insupportable policy. The Government should announce an immediate review.

How to cut vets' bills at a stroke

My cat Eartha Kit is thrilled with the news that she can now be treated on the NHS. "Yes! No more vet waiting rooms and no more moans from you about the bill," she crowed, pawing at the headline that said "Patients play sick to get pets drugs". She then sat on the newspaper page until I agreed to read it. Evidently, the NHS could be spending as much as £1m a year on treating people's pets. That comes about because people go to the doctor and pretend to have the same illnesses as that of their cat or dog or whatever. One dog-owner had been prescribed suppositories for her arthritis but was giving them to her poodle. Another was collecting insulin for her husband but giving it to her pooch instead. It certainly saves on the vet bills but could be worrying for the husband.

There is something rather sinister about all of this and I think it is best



not to mention it to children. At the moment one of mine is trying to improve the quality of life for woodlice. That involves capturing them, imprisoning them in a glass jar and feeding them greenery. Every attempt so far has resulted in escape or illness followed by sudden death. The last to go were Rosy and Diamond

and another charity case could arrive any day. I'm sure that impersonating a woodlouse in an attempt to procure medical treatment is illegal.

Eartha is disdainful of the woodlice argument. She is a militant animal rights campaigner but only for certain animals. In fact the only animals on her list are felines. Vets, she says, are harmful to feline mental health. Even thinking about the waiting room makes her a basket case: the flea powder aroma, the huge, scabbing dogs, the yowling humans.

We have to endure this because Eartha has been on HRT on and off for years. Something to do with getting sprayed too early. She also has a problem with thinning hair near her tail.

She is now set on the idea that I will go to the doctor for her. I refuse, noting that being sectioned under the Mental Health Act is not one of my goals in life. Of course the one thing

that makes sense about all of this is that I, too, hate going to the vet. The cat-leukemia posters are terrifying and so is the bill. Evidently pet antibiotics cost £33.35 for 100 tablets compared to £5.75 for humans.

So here is an idea. Why not bring some form of veterinary service partially inside the NHS? Doctors and vets could work from the same buildings and it would be more convenient all round. Pet therapy would boom and it might prove a money-spinner. Eartha likes the idea but is more interested in making sure her own plan is carried out. In fact, she says she will leave if I don't get the doctor. I tell her that a pet is for life. She says that is a marketing slogan that exists to make people feel important. A human is not for life, she says, and stalks out the room. Perhaps just one appointment wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Ann Treneman

Just a mot, the professor is giving advice

All of us, no matter how well educated or imaginative, are often at a loss for the right word to describe a certain action or object. That word, in fact, which the French so inimitably call the *mot juste*. Well, not all the French, perhaps, because there are some French people who do not call it *le mot juste*. I am thinking of those very snobbish French people, who call it "ze right word", because things always sound a bit better in another language, don't they? I mean, imagine if the pop group Status Quo had been called "The Same Old Normal Situation", do you think they would have become worldwide stars? And imagine how big they would be if they sounded better ...

I am sorry. I seem to have lost the thread of the introduction to today's column, when all I wanted to say was that all of us are sometimes at a loss for the right word, which is where Professor Wordsmith comes in. Professor Wordsmith is of course our resident expert who deals with all your language problems, and he is here again today to leap fearlessly into the breach of malapropism. All yours, Prof!

This is a bit of a medical question, Prof, but if I knew the answer to it, it would save me a lot of time. You know when you are reaching at an awkward angle for something – like behind the driver's seat in a car or on top of a wardrobe – and you reach just a bit too far and stretch, and something in your shoulder just goes, and it causes tremendous pain, as if you had pulled a tiny muscle – well, I wonder if there is any name for this agonising process?

Because it quite often happens to me, and when my wife asks me why I am whimpering, it takes me so long to explain that she has lost interest in me before I have finished, so it would be nice to be able just to say, "I have merely done such-and-such to my shoulder" and retain her sympathy. Is there in fact such a word?

Professor Wordsmith writes: I wish I could say there was, but I do not think there is.

You know when they paint yellow lines on the edge of the street? And they paint straight over things like drains? Is there any name for this unwanted bit of yellow decoration?

Professor Wordsmith writes: If there is, it is unknown to me.

You know when you get a tune in your head and you



Miles Kington

can't get rid of it, and it just stays there all day? In my case it tends to be an old tune recorded by Nat King Cole called "Sweet Lorraine". I don't know if you remember "Sweet Lorraine", but it was a 1940s song which had a smashing tune but stupid words, like so many of those evergreen standards recorded by Nat Cole, which makes you remember that Cole was in fact a damned good jazz pianist before he ever became a spry singer. In fact, my feeling is that even when Nat King Cole became a millionaire through his singing, he still chose the sort of songs that a pianist would ...

Professor Wordsmith writes: I am sorry to interrupt but I am not quite sure of the question ... Are you asking if there is a name for obsessive humming, or are you asking if there is a name for an obscure pianist who later becomes famous as a singer? Neither. I am asking if there is a name for the kind of song like "Sweet Lorraine" which has a great tune but rotten lyrics?

Professor Wordsmith writes: Not so far as I know. There is a word "iatrogenic" which refers to illnesses caused by doctors. You can use it of an ailment caused by misdiagnosis or of side-effects caused by the wrong treatment – anyway, it is a very good word to use about what happens when a doctor gets something wrong and inflicts unnecessary illness on a patient. What I want to know is whether there is a word for the opposite process, that is, for when a patient inflicts disease on a doctor. It is quite possible that a doctor – who, after all, only sees ill people – may pick up some infection or condition from a patient. It would be very helpful if there were some description for this process.

Professor Wordsmith writes: Yes, it would, wouldn't it? Let us hope that such a word exists.

Professor Wordsmith will be back again soon. Keep those queries rolling in!

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John Scott

John Scott had the true lexicographer's passion for accuracy and plain English.

A fierce debate with his collaborator on the ground-breaking 1981 *Dictionary of Waste and Water Treatment* over the use of odour versus smell was carried on over the telephone lines to Edinburgh, in daily discussions which lasted for some months, with Scott refusing to budge from the use of smell. His writing also brought him into the company of that legion of lexicographers, translators, specialist librarians and working builders and engineers for whom his technical dictionaries had an almost biblical value. This admiration was not unfounded: the *RIBA Journal* described the *Dictionary of Civil Engineering* (1965) as "probably the best dictionary of modern structural terminology available in English today".

Scott's standards of accurate definition had much to do with his generation's distrust of the abstractions and universals which led the world so far astray in the devil's decade of



Scott: technological dictionaries

the 1930s. Much as he hated his lessons at Wellington College, he was an accomplished Latinist, and this too contributed to his wish to clarify and his distrust of emotive expression. His references were discrete, but never to the point of locking the reader into his sense of the term. His authority came from experience, from having been in the mine or on the site, from having seen with his own eyes the consequences of lowering standards (he was one of

the Flixborough inspectors), and from his own laboured use, year in, year out, in his own cellar and on his own roof, of the tools he so clearly defined and described.

Scott was born in 1915 in Jullundur, Punjab, the second of three sons. His father was then a captain in the 37th Baluchistan Horse. The family combined a tradition of service to church and state with gifted and colourful forebears on his mother's side, including the 18th-century Yorkshireman of sport, Colonel Thornton of Thornville Royal, for whom the sky perpetually rained meat, the watercolourist Robert Philip Atkinson, Canon J.C. Atkinson, nonegarian author of the classic *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish* (1891), and Robert Leicester Atkinson RN, doctor to Captain R.F. Scott's final expedition to the South Pole.

Scott was sent from India to be educated at Wellington College in Berkshire, a place he remembered with little affection, although he appears to have fitted in well. From Wellington, he

went to Imperial College, London University, where he took a BSc in Engineering.

His retreat from his class and background appears to have begun around this time, as he adopted the style he favoured on and off for the rest of his life: sandals, an open-necked shirt, dungarees held up with a string or wire belt, a shirt pocket bristling with sharpened pencils, travel by bicycle.

He was set for a career in structural engineering when a yen for travel took him to the oilfields of Romania for British Petroleum. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, he escaped from Romania by hanging from the couplings of the last train out when it was boarded by militia, then strolling round the border posts to rejoin his compartment on the Hungarian side.

Scott hoped to be registered as a conscientious objector but was denied that status, even when he "lost" his rifle bolt in training. A compromise was eventually reached by which he was sent to design gun em-

placements at Scapa Flow, and later to the collieries at Aberfan. War brought him marriage to Paulette Charrier, a secretary in de Gaulle's London office, the death of his brother David at the Caen landings in June 1945, and in July of that year the birth of his first child, Amanda.

Scott spent the early post-war years working in Paris but returned to London when his marriage failed. In the mid-1950s he moved in with and eventually married Maria, already the mother of two children by the writer Philip O'Connor. He then began a long series of technical office jobs, starting with the Ove Arup partnership and ending with the National Coal Board in 1980. In between came jobs in Saudi Arabia, where he became "Mr Smith" the newscaster on the side and was briefly held in manacles for injuring a boy with his car, and in Vienna with Unidol.

His writing life began in the mid-1950s, when he started work on his *Dictionary of Building*, published by Penguin in 1958. From then until the very

week of his death, his days were extraordinarily full. Not only did he write and keep in print four comprehensive technical dictionaries, but he also found the time to add to fluent French and Romanian an excellent command of Russian, German and Spanish.

He was also continually repairing the family home in London in order to trade up. He moved from Soho to Regent's Park to Kew and Chiswick and finally to Hornsey. Into these surroundings of upturned floorboards, fresh-mixed concrete and half-sealed plumbing arrived three more children, who grew up with an image of their father as a man in a hurry - harking instructions from two floors up at the other end of a tangle of copper piping, cutting and pasting yet another dictionary, rushing with shiny briefcase and ill-fitting suit to catch the bus to the detested day job. To some extent, these activities merged, as Scott tested his dictionary knowledge on the houses, sometimes with unusual results.

Apart from his allotment and some challenging improvised copper and fibreglass cul- lery which he made, Scott had no leisure activities. Even within his family circle, he tended to confine small talk to his latest technical interest. Persuaded to take a holiday in 1987, only two sights excited much enthusiasm during a long round-trip between the Languedoc and Barcelona: one a factory chimney, the other a timber-truss suspension bridge. However, towards the end of his life, he became a keen participant in the Sunday outings of the Jewish Ramblers, among whose circle his gentle way of speech, his absolute honesty and humility, and his encyclopaedic knowledge of concrete things made him good friends.

When Scott died he was working on *Padlock's Broken*, a series of portraits of people he admired, with scarcely an engineer among them. His last complete book, co-authored with Clinton van Zyl, *Introduction to EMC*, on electro-magnetic compatibility and the

dangers of electro-magnetic radiation, is due from Butterworth's this summer.

John Scott led a difficult but an interesting and productive life. He was too awkward in society to gather much celebrity, but his work, like the man himself, had a laconic, diffident charm which grew upon his readers and those who knew him. He wasted very little time.

Peter O'Connor

John Somerville Scott, lexicographer, builder, and chartered mining and structural engineer; born Jullundur, Punjab 22 February 1915; author of *The Penguin Dictionary of Building* 1958, *The Penguin Dictionary of Civil Engineering* 1965, *Dictionary of Waste and Water Treatment* 1981, *First Dictionary of Microcomputing* 1987, (jointly with Clinton van Zyl) *Introduction to EMC* 1997; married 1944 Paulette Charrier (one daughter deceased; marriage dissolved), 1960 Maria O'Connor (née Steiner; two sons, one daughter; marriage dissolved); died London 12 May 1997.

Eddie Jones

"It was a fabulous time, a golden age for jazz," the bassist Eddie Jones said of the ten years he spent in Count Basie's band which began in 1953. "It was a good time to be in that band and a good time to be alive. Working for Basie was a pleasure: all he asked was that you show up, do your job, look good, and play well." A job in the band was much to be prized. "You couldn't afford to get sick in that band - if you didn't show up you disappeared."

Jones's family home in Red Bank, New Jersey was two doors away from Count Basie's. As a youngster he studied music education at the local Howard University where he played jazz with future Basieites Frank Wess and Bill Hughes, as well as the embryonic jazz composer Benny Golson. Jones then worked as a teacher for a year before he began graduate studies, during which time he toured briefly as the bassist with Sarah Vaughan.

At this time Frank Wess joined the Basie band and, when bassist Milt Hilton decided to leave, Wess told Basie about Jones. One day in 1953 Jones came home to find that Wess had been waiting there for him for a couple of hours. He took little persuading and joined Basie at once.

Basie had moved to Kansas City during the late Twenties. He joined Walter Page's Blue Devils in 1928 and from there his piano-playing had become a potent element in the Kansas City style which later swept across the world to influence every corner of jazz. Basie's technique was based on the power of the rhythm section.

He played very sparsely and allowed the other rhythm instruments to sound through. This emphasised the importance of the beat and provided a light, close-knit and springy lift to the band, which had been heard in jazz before. When Basie formed his original band,

later renowned as one of the most famous groups in jazz, he took his former boss Walter Page on bass for his rhythm section, and added Freddie Green on guitar and Jo Jones on drums.

Green was still there when Eddie Jones joined and, teamed with the drummer Sonny Payne, then extended the great tradition and ensured that the Basie band and the word "swing" continued to be interchangeable.

Jones had a big, fat tone and an exquisite sense of time. The exposure he got with Basie made him immediately in demand amongst the top-most echelons of jazz musicians and he seemed to be seldom out of the recording studios. He recorded with bandleaders including, amongst many others, Ray Charles, Milt Jackson, Coleman Hawkins, Joe Newman, Thad Jones and Ben Webster. But it was with what became known as the "New Testament" Basie band of the period (the original Kansas City band being the "Old Testament") Basie band of the period that he made his most profound mark on jazz.

I will never forget Jones's underpants. Britain 40 years ago was conservative in attitude compared to that of our friends in the former colonies. We didn't have bubblegum, Coke, colour television or even Marks & Spencer's underwear - let alone boxer shorts. Before the Basie band made its first visit here in 1957 I had exchanged letters with Benny Powell, one of its trombonists, and on 21 April 1957 I turned up to see him at the Palace Theatre in Blackpool where the band was to play that evening. One of the staff left me at the door of the band's dressing room. When I opened it I was confronted by the rear view of four large pairs of underpants.

I had stumbled upon the Giants and the Midgets in action. The musicians of the Basie

band at the time fell naturally into the Giants - colossal-sized musicians - and the Midgets. While changing for the evening's concert two of the latter, the diminutive saxophonist Frank Wess and the trumpeter Joe Newman, who were, like the giants, clad only in "shorts", had begun a furious row. The Giants, in the huge frames of Eddie Jones, haritonone player Charlie Fowlkes, and trombonist Henry Coker and vocalists Joe Williams surrounded them benignly to look down at the fun.

In those days British underpants were firstly, off-white and uncomfortable purely functional things that one bought from the Co-op. But what exotic and dissolute splendour now confronted me! Eddie Jones's underpants were adorned with gold fish, while Charlie Fowlkes's were a riot of purple bunnies, Henry Coker wore some New York tartan and Joe Williams was bedecked with dominoes.

Jones finally left the band in 1963 because he felt he was underpaid. The economics of a big band have always been controversial. Duke Ellington ("But you'd be working with me, Sweetie"), Basie and Woody Herman were all fundamentally adept at luring musicians to work for them, touting musical satisfaction as being as much of a reward as the scavenged money. But on this occasion Basie had unbalanced the formula and around the time that Jones left he also lost the trumpeters Snooky Young and Joe Newman, the singer Joe Williams and the two saxophone players Frank Wess and Frank Foster. As a result he began paying better wages.

One of the most attractive jobs for an accomplished player is in the New York studios where television, radio and commercial recordings are made. Jones now tried to break into this field but, like many



Big, fat tone and an exquisite sense of time: Jones in New York, 1958 Photograph: David Redfern

black musicians before and after him, found barriers in his way which he thought were put there by racial prejudice.

Ironically his next success was reputedly by the same process in reverse. Disenchanted with the music business Jones joined IBM as a trainee. Adapted at the work, his progress was rapid and he swiftly joined the company's management team. Rightly or wrongly some

of his former colleagues in the music business believed that he was there as a "stow" black man.

Later Jones worked for an insurance company in Hartford, Connecticut, and as he had whilst with IBM he used his holidays to tour with jazz groups. He had been a member of many bands and played festivals in America and Europe,

usually as a member of George Wein's Newport All Stars.

He was always one of the happiest of men, and his broad grin, not often absent from his face, was as inspiring as his prodigious bass-playing.

Steve Voce

Edward "Eddie" Jones, bassist; born Red Bank, New Jersey 1 March 1928; died Hartford, Connecticut 31 May 1997.

Emilio Azcarraga

Emilio Azcarraga Milmo was an autocratic billionaire who dominated Mexican broadcasting by combining low-grade television shows with political favouritism.

Azcarraga, known as "El Tigre" for his fearsome business acumen and a shock of white hair, created an empire known as Grupo Televisa. It included four television networks with about 300 television stations throughout Mexico, 17 radio stations, numerous magazines and newspapers, three record companies, two leading football teams, America and Necaxa, and the Aztec stadium, as well as Mexico City's Museum of Contemporary Art.

Azcarraga built Televisa into the world's largest producer of Spanish-speaking television and in 1996 *Forbes* magazine estimated his personal fortune at \$2bn, one of the largest in Latin America. "He didn't do anything small," said Jacobo Zabludovsky, Azcarraga's busi-

ness partner and anchor of Televisa's nightly news. "Everything he did was planned on a grand scale."

His power depended upon close ties to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the right-wing Mexican party that has held power for decades, and he made no bones about the backing Televisa gave to PRI candidates and policies while suppressing news about the opposition. When, at a private dinner in 1993, the former Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari asked powerful businessman to contribute \$25m each to the PRI, Azcarraga pledged \$70m. "I am a soldier of the president of the government," he was quoted as saying. "I, and all of you, have earned so much money over the past six years that I think we have a big debt to this government."

In return for his support, successive presidents helped Azcarraga maintain unchecked control of the media and, even



Azcarraga: on a grand scale

after public protest forced Televisa to introduce journalistic objectivity to its coverage, he remained their loyal supporter. The Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo said in a statement after his death last Wednesday that Azcarraga had been a "great businessman" who had "brought international prestige to Mexico."

In addition to influencing the political landscape of Mexico, Azcarraga sought to shape the view Mexicans have of themselves, with immensely popular television shows that relied heavily on game shows featuring saucy showgirls, mariachi bands and overwrought "telenovella" soap operas.

His philosophy was simple: be once told a meeting of soap-opera stars that the country was a nation of poor people who had suffered abuse and would inevitably continue to do so. "The television has the obligation to entertain those people, to take away from them their sad reality and their difficult future," he said. "I mean the middle and lower classes. Rich people like me are not clients of television because we never go out to buy anything."

Azcarraga demanded unquestioning obedience and absolute loyalty from his television stars and should they appear on

any other network they would be summarily banned for life from Televisa. His style was notoriously belittling and he kept a tall wooden chair in his office in which those due for a reprimand would be told to sit so that their feet could not touch the ground, reducing them to sense of infantile helplessness.

But he was not always successful. In 1990 he launched a daily sports newspaper in the United States, the *National*, which closed 17 months later with losses of \$100m and in 1986 was forced to sell his US television interests on anti-monopoly grounds.

Azcarraga was born, as legend would have it, the same month that his father, Emilio Azcarraga Viduareta, bought Radio XEW, a Mexico City station that became the first stone in the family empire. The elder Azcarraga, who started out as a shoe salesman in the northern Mexican city of Mon-

terrey, was openly critical of his son and referred to him as "my son, the idiot".

He was sent to a military academy in the United States to toughen him up but he never graduated. Despite reservations, Azcarraga joined his father's company as a salesman at the age of 21 and took over as chairman in 1964.

In his private life Azcarraga indulged the opulent privileges - and privacy - of great wealth, amassing five wives, a good deal of property, private jets and at least one 240ft yacht. On 3 March in Los Angeles he made a rare public appearance to announce he would be handing over the running of Televisa to his 29-year-old son, Emilio Azcarraga Jeon.

Edward Helmore

Emilio Azcarraga Milmo, businessman; born 6 September 1930; married five times (one son, three daughters); died Miami 16 April 1997.

Richard Trench

By nature, the writer and traveller Richard Trench was a nomad.

He was a scavenger for information and because he found almost everything interesting he adapted to any situation with relative ease. This desire for knowledge made him a very lively companion; he took a keen interest in what one had to say and was positively delighted if he stumbled across an arcane fact in the course of a conversation. He was always keen to learn something new and was generous about sharing his knowledge.

In the late Seventies, starting from Mauritania, he crossed the Sahara by camel caravan to try and find out what was happening at the notorious Mali salt mines at Taoudeni where political prisoners were sent to die. His account of the journey, *Forbidden Sands*, was published in 1978. Other Europeans have crossed the Sahara by camel, including Geoffrey Moorhouse in 1972, but this does not detract from the omnipresent dangers of the desert: sandstorms, isolation, constant thirst, rumblings of war from the Spanish Sahara and fear of both discovery and imprisonment.

Trench wrote convincingly about his fears but also about his love of the country. When he returned to the Sahara a year or so later the Polisario were in charge of Mauritania and the feeling of the country he had so admired had changed. A few years later he went to Eritrea where he joined the guerrillas and from where he wrote for the *Observer*. Later he also wrote for the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* on a freelance basis.

Trench was educated at public school; he went on to Essex University but dropped out after two years, as he found university life boring and too restricting. He became a journalist in Northern Ireland, where he learned "incredible lessons", and reported for the newspapers *Seven Days*, *Friends*, *Oz* and *Ink*; he later scripted a documentary about Ireland. He also wrote for *IT* and at some point went to live in a tent in a friend's garden, from which he entertained, but he badly neglected his health, becoming skeletal thin and losing all his teeth. He had strong political commitments, and he was a firm believer in social justice in Britain.

When he returned to England from the Sahara in the late Seventies he began to lead a more settled life with his family and children in London. But his talent for throwing himself into whatever he was doing did not desert him, and his original approach to London, *London Under London*, a subterranean guide, was first published in 1984; he found burrowing around under London with his co-author Ellis Hillman as engrossing as any of

his travels, and when the book was updated in 1993 he kept producing new pieces of information.

Between 1982 and 1987 Trench compiled the annual *Time Out* guide to Paris, despite speaking very little French, although he did have a sister living in Paris. This kind of project which required the ferreting out of facts was something he much enjoyed. He also wrote regularly for *Chronicle*, another project which required accumulating facts.

But the desert world continued to fascinate him. *Arabian Travellers*, published in 1986 with a foreword by Wilfred Thesiger, is a comprehensive look at the travellers to Arabia and their reasons for travelling in that "huge white holi". Trench wrote in his introduction that "Few were attractive characters; they were imperialists, sacrilegious, adventurers, romantics, opportunists, spies and simple searchers." Most of these characteristics were the kind of things which Trench despised. When he travelled he believed in identifying with the people and the country he was in; he had no time for the imperialist attitude or any other kind of pretension.

His enthusiasm for new things, places and people included an enthusiasm for his own appearance; he would often appear sporting a dramatic new hairstyle. He rather delighted in looking shambol-



Trench: ferreting out of facts

ic and unkempt and was thrilled one day when a lady who saw him waiting to cross the road pointedly wound up her car window and looked her doors.

Recently his younger son had been chosen to play the part of Oliver in the big new Disney film, being filmed in Ireland, and only a few weeks ago before his sudden death from a heart attack he had been discussing a new idea for another book on the Middle East with his publisher John Murray, having just finished a gazetteer of Arab tribes.

Sarah Anderson

Richard Hugh Roger Chenevis Trench, writer and traveller; born 11 March 1949; twice married (two sons, one daughter); died London 18 May 1997.

Nikolai Tikhonov, politician, died Moscow 1 June, aged 92. Chairman of the Council of Ministers 1980-85, which gave him the title of prime minister.

Pio Gianotti, monk, died Recife, Brazil 31 May, aged 98. A wandering Italian-born Capuchin known as "Frei Damiao", revered as a saint in north-east Brazil.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

MARRIAGES
FORSTY/ASHWORTH: Alastair Forsyth and Jackie Ashworth (Gray), at 12 noon yesterday in St James Church, Rochester between Adrian Wade Wynns and Lucy Anne Braithwaite.

Birthdays
King Constantine of the Hellenes, 57; Richard Bonalack, mechanical engineer, 93; Lord Boyd-Carpenter, former government minister, 89; Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom, aerospace consultant, 77; Miss Heather Cooper, astronomer and broadcaster, 48; Mr Handel Davies, aeronautical engineer, 85; Mr Mark Elder, conductor, 50; Mr Marvin Hamill, composer, 53; The Right Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, 61; Professor Dame Rosalyn Higgins QC, a judge of the International Court of Justice, 60; Mr Trevor Jesty, cricketer, 49; Sir Kenneth Jopp, former High Court judge, 80; Miss Sally Kellerman, actress, 60; Miss Sonia Lawson, artist, 63; Sir Denis Mountain, honorary

president, Eagle Star Insurance, 68; Professor Robin Orr, composer, 88; Lord Penrose, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 59; The Rev Canon Dr Anthony Phillips, former headmaster, King's School, Canterbury, 61; Sir Christopher Slade, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, 70; Mr Johnny Speight, scriptwriter, 77; Sir Sigmund Sternberg, chairman, IYS, 76; Mrs Barbara Tate, president, Society of Women Artists, 70; Mr Charlie Watts, rock drummer, 56.

Anniversaries
Births John III Sobieski, King of Poland, 1624; Donatien Alphonse-François, Marquis de Sade, writer and libertine, 1740; Count Alessandro di

Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo), impostor, 1743; Robert Fultner, composer, 1807; Grace Aguilar, novelist and historian, 1816; Pope Pius X (Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto), 1835; Thomas Hardy, novelist, 1840; Paul Albert Besnard, painter and etcher, 1849; Sir Edward William Elgar, composer, 1857; Paul Felix Weingartner, conductor, 1863; Arthur Stuart Menzies Hutchinson, novelist, 1879; Nuhar Sarkis Gulbenkian, millionaire, 1896; Lotte Reiniger, film animator, 1899; (Peter John) Johnny Weissmuller, swimmer and film "Tarzan", 1903; Deshaun Ode, Archbishop of Canterbury, 999; Álvaro de Luna, politician and poet, executed, 1453; Pieter Aertsen, historical painter, 1575; Madeleine de Scudéry,

poet and novelist, 1701; Robert Foulis, bookseller and printer, 1776; John Vinton, poet, 1798; Manuel del Pópulo Vicente Rodríguez García, tenor and composer, 1832; Maximilien Paul-Émile Littré, lexicographer, 1801; Giuseppe Garibaldi, Italian nationalist leader, 1802; Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky, playwright, 1866; Sir Redvers Henry Buller VC, general, 1908; Friedrich Högar, composer and conductor, 1927; Hermas Darowski, composer, 1947; Emile-Auguste Chautier ("Alain"), philosopher, 1951; George Simon Kaufman, playwright, 1961; Victoria Mary Sackville-West, writer, 1962; George Alfred Barnard Brown, statesman, 1885; Andrés Segovia, guitarist, 1987; Sir Rex Carey Harrison,

actor, 1990. On this day: King Henry V of England married Catherine de Valois, 1420; Lord George Gordon led "No Popery Riots" in London, 1780; Corfu was occupied by Greek troops, 1864; President Grover Cleveland married Miss Frances Folsom at the White House, 1886; Japan took possession of Formosa (Taiwan) from China, 1895; the world's first patent for wireless telegraphy was granted to Guglielmo Marconi, 1896; under the terms of the Snyder Act, US-born Indians became US citizens, 1924; clothes rationing began, 1941; the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place in Westminster Abbey, 1953. Today is the Feast Day of St Attalus, St Erasmus or Elmo, St Eugenius I, pope.

Saints Marcellinus and Peter, St Nicholas the Pilgrim, St Pothinus and his Companions and St Stephen of Sweden.

Lectures

National Gallery: Evelyn Welch, "Art and Society in Italy 1350-1500", 1pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum: Maxine Smithman, "The Silhouette of Fashion: women's underwear from 1947", 2.30pm.

Appointments

Mr Bob Harris, to be Governor of Anguilla.
Mr David Rowland Smith, to be a

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Duke of Edinburgh, Honorary Fellow, Zoological Society of London, opens the new breeding facility for Asian elephants at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, Bedfordshire; Master, archery the Trinity-Tale Dinner at Trinity House, Tower Hill, London EC3. The Duke of York, as Elder Brother, attends the Trinity-Tale Dinner at the Corporation of Trinity House at Trinity House, Tower Hill, London EC3.
Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, Horse Guards, St James's Palace, London SW1A, to be Development Manager of Seal & Cow.

Exchange's ambitious technology plans are hurting private investors

Many claimed it would never happen but investors are going to be charged for exercising their right to remain outside Crest nominee accounts and receive paper share certificates.

One leading investment house is believed to be planning to, in effect, give a discount to investors who are prepared to disappear into its nominee system.

But leading private client stockbroker Greig Middleton is doubling its administration charge for clients who want to retain paper certificates.

It is introducing a £7.50 payment for contract notes "to reflect compliance and settlement costs" for clients on the nominee list.

"For those not in nominees, or those unable to settle electronically, the charge will increase to £15 in due course," a spokesman said.

Norman Andrews, GM's chief executive, said the double payment for non-nominee

clients reflected the increasing cost of paper settlement, embracing transfer forms and certificates. "However we intend delaying the introduction of this higher charge to allow clients to transfer to a system of settlement compatible with Crest, such as our own nominee company," he said.

Crest is the computerised settlement system which has come in for heavy criticism from some private client stockbrokers.

It will face its biggest test yet this week as the huge Halifax flotation hits the stock market. Many market firms, big and small, fear the Crest performance will leave much to be desired.

There will, without doubt, be a Halifax stampede. Institutions need to buy and private client brokers are known to have long lists of orders; if trading is as heavy as indicated the Crest system could be choked.

But, the old paper settlement

arrangement would probably have been overwhelmed by the £25m computerised set-up should, after all, be sufficiently sophisticated to take the strain.

Introduced last summer, it has had plenty of time to get its act together. Yet private client stockbrokers have complained bitterly their back offices are often forced to work late into the evening, incurring extra costs, because of the system's deficiencies.

It is the successor to Taurus, which has achieved an unenviable place in City folklore. After costing an incredible £400m the most costly disaster to hit the Stock Exchange was abandoned in 1993.

Crest, of course, is a manifestation of the Stock Exchange's desire to keep pace with markets around the world. In these days of international trading, electronic settlement is clearly essential for any ambitious share market.

But, as is so often the case



STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

In the hectic scramble to satisfy the big boys, it is the small man, in this case the private investor, who loses out.

Under Crest private shareholders have five choices. They can operate through their broker's nominee company, join an outside nominee company, such as one run by a solicitor, or become a sponsored member of Crest, which should cost no more than £20 a year.

There is also the opportunity to carry on as before, including collecting share certificates (at extra cost). The fifth and most damaging option from a Stock Exchange point of view would be if an uncomfortable number of private investors

gave up stock market investing altogether.

If many did adopt such a policy it would be a disconcerting development for many stockbroking firms whose very existence depends on the small player.

There is no doubt life is getting much more difficult, and expensive, for the private investor. Settlement periods have been reduced with instant settlement presumably the ultimate step, and the appearance of nominee accounts means the link, already fairly tenuous, with the company in which an investment is made is smashed completely.

Unless the nominee company is prepared to supply

yearly reports they will no longer drop through private shareholders' letter boxes and such joys as attending the yearly shareholders' meeting will be difficult to achieve. Small dividend payments will be retained until the nominee company has collected enough cash to, in its eyes, make a payment worthwhile. And shareholder perks are often cut off.

Nominee arrangements have other disadvantages. There is the rumoured case of a group of investors putting cash into Halifax through a nominee. They were not pleased when they discovered their individual share entitlements were lost and they were forced to divide the single and smaller nominee allocation between them.

In the remorseless advance of computerised trading there seems to be few resolute souls around to champion the cause of the small investor.

Although dwarfed by the institutional battalions in

valuation terms they represent a substantial number of the daily bargains recorded.

It is time some relief was offered. The small player seems to have lost out in all the high technology initiatives. There must now be the looming danger that companies may feel the climate is right to press for dispensing with individual share certificates altogether. That would be a dispiriting development. With the gap between the needs of big and small investors widening wider and wider there may be a requirement for some form of two-tier market. Perhaps GM's decision to charge more for paper settlement is a tentative sign a dual-level market will eventually emerge.

Footsie fell sharply on Friday but still seems to be on course for the 3,000 points so many now predict. Second and third liners, however, remain on the sidelines.

The Blair blue chips surge has

prompted Legal & General's investment team to lift its 12-month forecast from 4,200 to 4,700. "With a dividend yield sub 3.6 per cent investors should now be adopting a cautious posture just on economic fundamentals, let alone any possible damage inflicted on the corporate sector by Gordon Brown," the team says.

"However, we are not bearish. Dividend growth of 8 per cent looks to be a sustainable prospect and institutional liquidity remains historically very high. We believe this justifies a neutral position."

Boots is the main profits performer this week. On Thursday it should produce yet another healthy performance with year's profits of £258m against £243.5m. Today publisher Enam is expected to report year's profits of £120m against £86.5m. Other reporting this week include Railtrack (£305m against £261m) and Vodafone (£495m against £467.9m).

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: Ex rights & Ex dividend: A Ex in United Securities Market & Suspended; P Ex in Partly Paid up; N Ex in New Issue; S Ex in Special Dividend; T Ex in Treasury Stock.

Index	Value	Change	Index	Value	Change
FTSE 100 - Real-time	2,981.25	+10.75	UK Stock Market Report	2,981.25	+10.75
FTSE 100 - End of day	2,970.50	+10.00	UK Company News	2,970.50	+10.00
FTSE 250 - Real-time	1,512.50	+5.00	Foreign Exchange	1,512.50	+5.00
FTSE 250 - End of day	1,507.50	+5.00			

Anyone with a land-line telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its portfolio history, phone 0801 223 333.

For assistance, call our helpline on 0800 4570 5000 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm).

Call cost 6p per minute. Call charges include VAT.

Interest Rates

UK	Rate	Germany	Rate	US	Rate	Japan	Rate
Bank	6.25%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	5.75%	Discount	0.50%
Base	6.25%	London	4.00%	Fed Funds	5.25%	Discount	2.50%
Intervention	3.75%	Canada	4.75%	Sales	5.00%	Discount	3.00%
Discount	7.75%	France	5.00%	10-Day Repo	5.25%	Discount	10.00%
Advances	2.75%	Denmark	3.25%	Swedish Repo (Avg)	4.0%	Discount	12.50%

Oil Exploration

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
BP	248.50	+1.50	Shell	248.50	+1.50
Esso	248.50	+1.50	Amoco	248.50	+1.50
Exxon	248.50	+1.50	Conoco	248.50	+1.50

Other Financial

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Barclays	248.50	+1.50	HSBC	248.50	+1.50
Bank of Scotland	248.50	+1.50	First Direct	248.50	+1.50

Telecommunications

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
BT	248.50	+1.50	Telecom	248.50	+1.50
British Telecom	248.50	+1.50	Telecom	248.50	+1.50

Retailers, Food

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Asda	248.50	+1.50	Waitrose	248.50	+1.50
Asda	248.50	+1.50	Waitrose	248.50	+1.50

Textiles & Apparel

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Next	248.50	+1.50	Primark	248.50	+1.50
Next	248.50	+1.50	Primark	248.50	+1.50

Tobacco

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
British American Tobacco	248.50	+1.50	Imperial Tobacco	248.50	+1.50
British American Tobacco	248.50	+1.50	Imperial Tobacco	248.50	+1.50

Transport

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
British Airways	248.50	+1.50	Virgin Atlantic	248.50	+1.50
British Airways	248.50	+1.50	Virgin Atlantic	248.50	+1.50

Water

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Anglo Water	248.50	+1.50	Thames Water	248.50	+1.50
Anglo Water	248.50	+1.50	Thames Water	248.50	+1.50

Support Services

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Capgemini	248.50	+1.50	Capgemini	248.50	+1.50
Capgemini	248.50	+1.50	Capgemini	248.50	+1.50

Longs

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Longsight	248.50	+1.50	Longsight	248.50	+1.50
Longsight	248.50	+1.50	Longsight	248.50	+1.50

Property

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Property	248.50	+1.50	Property	248.50	+1.50
Property	248.50	+1.50	Property	248.50	+1.50

Life Assurance

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Life Assurance	248.50	+1.50	Life Assurance	248.50	+1.50
Life Assurance	248.50	+1.50	Life Assurance	248.50	+1.50

Government Securities

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Government Securities	248.50	+1.50	Government Securities	248.50	+1.50
Government Securities	248.50	+1.50	Government Securities	248.50	+1.50

Shorts

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Shorts	248.50	+1.50	Shorts	248.50	+1.50
Shorts	248.50	+1.50	Shorts	248.50	+1.50

Index-linked

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Index-linked	248.50	+1.50	Index-linked	248.50	+1.50
Index-linked	248.50	+1.50	Index-linked	248.50	+1.50

Undated

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Undated	248.50	+1.50	Undated	248.50	+1.50
Undated	248.50	+1.50	Undated	248.50	+1.50

Chemicals

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Chemicals	248.50	+1.50	Chemicals	248.50	+1.50
Chemicals	248.50	+1.50	Chemicals	248.50	+1.50

Engineering

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Engineering	248.50	+1.50	Engineering	248.50	+1.50
Engineering	248.50	+1.50	Engineering	248.50	+1.50

Household Goods

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Household Goods	248.50	+1.50	Household Goods	248.50	+1.50
Household Goods	248.50	+1.50	Household Goods	248.50	+1.50

Insurance

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Insurance	248.50	+1.50	Insurance	248.50	+1.50
Insurance	248.50	+1.50	Insurance	248.50	+1.50

Gas Distribution

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Gas Distribution	248.50	+1.50	Gas Distribution	248.50	+1.50
Gas Distribution	248.50	+1.50	Gas Distribution	248.50	+1.50

Health Care

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Health Care	248.50	+1.50	Health Care	248.50	+1.50
Health Care	248.50	+1.50	Health Care	248.50	+1.50

Leisure & Hotels

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Leisure & Hotels	248.50	+1.50	Leisure & Hotels	248.50	+1.50
Leisure & Hotels	248.50	+1.50	Leisure & Hotels	248.50	+1.50

Investment Companies

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Investment Companies	248.50	+1.50	Investment Companies	248.50	+1.50
Investment Companies	248.50	+1.50	Investment Companies	248.50	+1.50

Investment Trusts

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Investment Trusts	248.50	+1.50	Investment Trusts	248.50	+1.50
Investment Trusts	248.50	+1.50	Investment Trusts	248.50	+1.50

Oil Exploration

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Oil Exploration	248.50	+1.50	Oil Exploration	248.50	+1.50
Oil Exploration	248.50	+1.50	Oil Exploration	248.50	+1.50

Other Financial

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Other Financial	248.50	+1.50	Other Financial	248.50	+1.50
Other Financial	248.50	+1.50	Other Financial	248.50	+1.50

Telecommunications

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Telecommunications	248.50	+1.50	Telecommunications	248.50	+1.50
Telecommunications	248.50	+1.50	Telecommunications	248.50	+1.50

Retailers, Food

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Retailers, Food	248.50	+1.50	Retailers, Food	248.50	+1.50
Retailers, Food	248.50	+1.50	Retailers, Food	248.50	+1.50

Textiles & Apparel

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Textiles & Apparel	248.50	+1.50	Textiles & Apparel	248.50	+1.50
Textiles & Apparel	248.50	+1.50	Textiles & Apparel	248.50	+1.50

Tobacco

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Tobacco	248.50	+1.50	Tobacco	248.50	+1.50
Tobacco	248.50	+1.50	Tobacco	248.50	+1.50

Transport

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Transport	248.50	+1.50	Transport	248.50	+1.50
Transport	248.50	+1.50	Transport	248.50	+1.50

Water

Company	Share Price	Change	Company	Share Price	Change
Water	248.50	+1.50	Water	248.50	+1.50
Water	248.50	+1.50	Water	248.50	+1.50

Support Services

Company	Share Price	Change</
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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

LBS principal to head Low Pay Commission

Barrie Clement
and Diane Coyle

The principal of the London Business School will be named today as the new head of the Low Pay Commission. His appointment comes only a day after the Government received an unequivocal call from one of its biggest union backers to accelerate its proposals for a minimum wage.

Professor George Bain, 58, will take on the unpaid position against a backdrop of increased debate about an appropriate

level for the minimum wage and the timing of its implementation. John Edmonds, leader of the powerful GMB union, called yesterday for a guaranteed wage of at least £4 an hour by next April, while a leading think-tank said anything over £3.75 would threaten jobs.

A former member of the Acat arbitration panel, Professor Bain will be called upon to exercise his negotiating skills when he starts the two-days-a-week post. His appointment, due to be announced today by Margaret Beckett, President of the

Board of Trade, was welcomed yesterday by union officials.

A spokeswoman for the public sector employees' union Unison said: "It is a very good, balanced appointment as he has credibility with both the unions and the business world."

Born in Canada, Professor Bain came to Britain in 1963 to take up a Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship at Oxford University and now holds dual nationality. He earns an estimated £200,000 a year from his post as the principal of the London Business School

and a handful of directorships, making him one of the country's best-paid academics.

He has previously been called upon to mediate in labour disputes. He also sat on the Senior Salaries Review Board when he supported a plan by the Conservatives to freeze civil servants' pay. But he proclaimed his political independence in January this year when he and a team of captains of industry were accused by the then deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine, of being Labour stooges.

Professor Bain said Mr Heseltine's claims about the members of the Commission of Public Policy and British Business, following their support for a minimum wage, were "outrageous".

Unions were warned privately by senior Labour politicians before the election that it may not be possible to introduce a lower limit to wages until early 1999 amid assertions by employers that it should be nearer £3.

Mr Edmonds said he would be "very disappointed" if workers should not benefit from the new law by spring next year. Mr Edmonds pointed out

it was possible to appoint the members of the Low Pay Commission this summer and it should be able to make its recommendation by autumn.

That would enable the Government to build the calculation into the November Budget and publish a definitive figure "before Christmas" in time for imposition in April.

The GMB's stance put it at odds with a report from a leading think-tank, to be published today, which says the national minimum wage should not be set above £3.75 an hour. Any-

thing higher than this figure, the Employment Policy Institute argues, would threaten jobs.

The report has been sponsored by Woolworths to B&Q retail group Kingsfisher and written by independent economists leaning to the left of centre. The figure it recommends is well below the £4.25 - half of full-time male median earnings - urged by some union leaders.

The report finds that low pay is so widespread that a £4-an-hour minimum would affect almost 5 million workers, most of them part-time women. But the

consequence is that setting the wage at that sort of level would be more likely to cost jobs.

The ultimate effects on inflation and unemployment would depend on general economic policy. Due to higher labour costs and knock-on effects on differentials up the pay scale, a £3.80 minimum would add more than 1 per cent to the inflation rate, the authors calculate.

But if that prompted interest rate rises under a tough anti-inflation policy, there would be additional job losses.

Scottish
Media in
£105m bid
to buy
Grampian

Cathy Newman

ITV companies looked set for a further round of consolidation yesterday as Scottish Media Group, formerly Scottish Television, confirmed it was in talks about acquiring its neighbour, Grampian Television, for £105m.

Scottish said discussions may lead to a deal being struck at around 320p a share. The price would top City expectations as analysts have in the past claimed the company would be worth no more than £100m, or around 300p a share. The offer is also significantly above Grampian's year-high price of 291.5p and its closing price last Friday of 265p.

Rumours of the takeover have been circulating for some time and intensified last October when Scottish sold its 20 per cent stake in ITV to Lord Hollick's United News & Media. The sale gave Scottish a £73.6m cash pile which observers widely expected would be used to consolidate its position north of the border.

Talks between Scottish and Grampian at the end of last year reportedly broke down after the two companies failed to agree on price. However, the pair already enjoy a certain level of co-operation with their joint interactive service, OKTV.

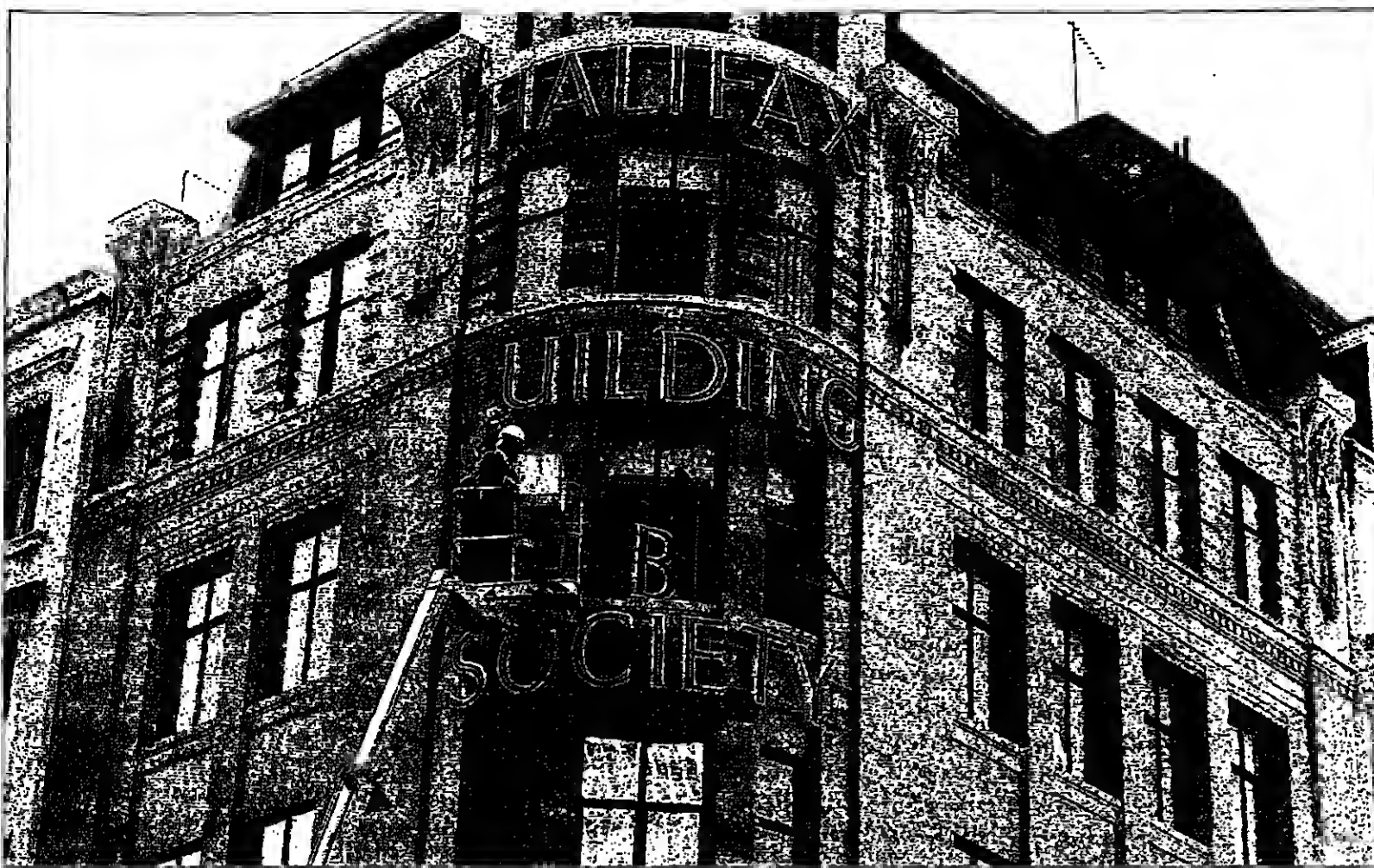
The deal, if it goes ahead, would be the latest in a wave of mergers in the television sector, made possible by the 1996 Broadcasting Act which revised the rules on media ownership.

Carlton Communications bought Westcountry Television for £85m last autumn and Granada is expected to make a bid for Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Television. Scottish has itself been mentioned as a target, and has been busy expanding over the past year to avoid being taken over.

Last July it announced the £120m acquisition of Caledonian Newspapers, publisher of the Glasgow-based *Herald*. It has also been rumoured that Gus Macdonald, chairman of Scottish, and Andrew Flanagan, managing director, would be keen to expand southwards by buying their other neighbour, Border Television.

A spokesman confirmed last night that the board of Scottish and Grampian had met to discuss a possible merger. He added that a further announcement would be made "as soon as appropriate".

However, he would not be drawn on the size of inevitable cost-cutting, nor the implications for its two main shareholders, Flextech, the cable programme supplier, and Mirror Group, both of which own a 20 per cent stake in Scottish.



Writing on the wall: Mike Blackburn helps remove the words 'building society' from a Halifax office over the weekend

Photograph: Emma Boam

Tom Stevenson
Financial EditorHalifax members bank
on scramble for shares

Mike Blackburn, chief executive of Halifax, donned his hard hat over the weekend to help final preparations for the relaunch of Britain's biggest building society as its fourth-largest bank, a giant financial services group with 7.6 million shareholders. Dealings began today in Halifax shares with analysts still pointing to an opening price in excess of £7 a share, despite the fall in financial stocks at the end of last week.

Members who have chosen to cash in their shares immediately will learn today how much they have been bid for their stock by the big investing institutions which are desperate to grab a slice of the action. Those members will watch from the sidelines

as an expected scramble for the giant funds for a weighting in Halifax shares gets under way.

Halifax's flotation has coincided with sharply focused attention on the financial sector, which analysts believe could undergo a radical process of consolidation in the next few years. Over the weekend it emerged that National Westminster Bank and Abbey National had entered merger talks, although these appeared to have foundered at an early stage.

The putative merger would have created a £25bn giant, heaving up NatWest's mortgage and insurance business with Abbey's strong home loans arm, second only to Halifax's, and its substantial presence in insurance, through Scottish Mutual and Abbey National Life.

NatWest, in keeping with its rival Barclays, is facing increasing calls from investors to improve performance, especially in investment banking. NatWest Markets, the merchant banking arm, has absorbed

large amounts of its parent's capital but it confirmed worries earlier this year when it announced it had lost £90m on wrongly priced derivatives trades.

The flotation of Halifax is the culmination of an extraordinary few weeks when the expected value of the new bank appeared to rise almost daily on the back of soaring share prices elsewhere in the sector. Average windfalls for members are now expected to exceed £2,300, giving a potentially massive boost

to the consumer sector of the economy.

If expectations are proved correct today, Halifax will end its 144-year history as a mutual with a price tag of £18bn. That would put it among the top 10 companies in the country, although still well behind rivals Lloyds TSB (worth more than £30bn) and HSBC, which owns Midland Bank and has a market capitalisation of almost £50bn.

With 20 million customers, £116bn of assets, 20 per cent of the UK residential mortgage market and £1 out of every £6 of cash savings, it will dominate the financial services scene. Attention is already focusing on where it might spend an estimated £3bn of surplus capital, with a bid for Legal & General or a merger with the Prudential doing the rounds.

House prices expected to jump 8%
before being hit by higher rates

Short-term housing market indicators

	House prices			Transactions		
	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
Greater London	5.1	9.0	7.8	17.0	10.0	-3.3
Rest of the SE	5.3	9.5	8.7	8.8	7.8	-3.4
East Anglia	3.2	10.0	8.0	8.2	12.9	-0.6
South West	3.1	8.9	7.8	5.4	9.0	-3.6
West Midlands	4.0	5.9	4.9	8.2	11.5	-2.1
East Midlands	3.4	7.6	7.1	2.3	13.3	-1.1
York & Humberside	1.6	9.3	7.3	6.5	11.8	-2.2
North West	3.7	6.4	5.7	14.0	11.2	-2.3
North	1.0	7.0	5.7	3.8	15.3	-0.2
Wales	0.6	9.0	6.0	4.1	13.0	-1.9
England & Wales	3.3	8.4	7.0	8.9	10.6	-2.5
Scotland	1.9	7.3	6.3	-	-	-
Northern Ireland	11.5	9.9	6.9	-	-	-
United Kingdom	4.2	8.4	7.3	-	-	-

Cathy Newman

The housing recovery is set to continue despite higher mortgages this year, with rising prices encouraging buyers and sellers back into the market. The recent surge in prices in the capital is expected to spread beyond London and the South this year but the increase in activity and prices will be short-lived, tailing off in 1998.

The number of housing transactions, set to increase by more than 10 per cent in England and Wales this year, will spark a big jump in house prices. The average UK house price is expected to rise by 8.4 per cent, twice as fast as last year's 4.2 per cent rise, according to the lat-

est edition of "Regional Housing Market Prospects" from Cambridge Econometrics.

In East Anglia, the West and East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside, the North-west, the North and Wales, activity is expected to overtake London and the South, with increases in the number of transactions ranging from 11.2 per cent in the North-west to as much as 15.3 per cent in the North.

But while low mortgage rates in 1996 encouraged the current state of activity, the anticipated rise in mortgage rates will hit the market next year, with all regions expected to show a sharp downturn in the number of houses sold or purchased.

London, the South-east and the South-west are forecast to show the steepest decline, with drops of over 3 per cent. While London's housing market is still bustling, there are already signs of a downturn. The number of transactions will go up only 10 per cent this year, compared with a massive 17 per cent in 1996.

Despite slowing activity, house prices will continue to rise next year, albeit at a less hectic rate. Prices throughout the UK will go up by an average of 7.3 per cent in 1998. This year and next, East Anglia and the South will experience the fastest acceleration in house-price inflation, but the growing numbers of buyers and sellers in Northern locations will not usher in commensurate inflation.

NAO revises
forecastsDiane Coyle
Economics Editor

A study of the Treasury's economic forecasts, due to be published in advance of the Budget, is expected to show public borrowing several billion pounds a year higher than predicted in last November's Budget.

The report is likely to recommend two changes to the forecast for growth and the public finances, both of which would push up the expected level of government borrowing. The unprecedented public audit was announced nearly two weeks ago. Treasury sources said the comptroller and auditor general, Sir John Bourne, had been asked to look at a number of "rosy" assumptions made by the former chancellor, Kenneth Clarke.

One of the likely changes is a reduction in the estimate for the economy's long-term growth potential from 2.5 to 2.25 per cent a year. This would reverse the quarter-point increase in potential growth introduced into the forecast last year.

The other is a reduction in the estimated savings from the "spend to save" crackdown on tax evasion and social security fraud announced last November. The last Budget Red Book predicted savings of £6.7bn over three years for expenditure of only £800m.

A National Audit Office report in January implied that savings from the tax crackdown would be lower than assumed.

The changed growth assumption would increase the borrowing requirement by about £5bn after four years, equivalent to 3p on the basic rate of income tax, because of lower tax revenues and higher government expenditure, according to Martin Weale, director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

David Walton, a senior economist at investment bank Goldman Sachs, said: "I think the purpose of this audit is to get a more pessimistic forecast for the PSBR." It would help dampen any pressure from the Government backbenches for increased public expenditure, he argued.

"If it turns out to be too pessimistic, it would in a sense have hidden some of the tax revenue for a couple of years," he said. Most economists think the decision to opt for an audit by the NAO, which has no expertise in economic forecasting, is a device to validate changes in the predictions the Treasury team wants to make anyway.

Some would even argue that 2.5 per cent is too low as a forecast for the economy's long-term growth. Sir Alan Budd, the Treasury's chief economic adviser, is said to believe the UK's potential growth has increased to more like 3 per cent, mainly because of favourable trends in the age structure of the population.

The date for the Budget is also expected to be announced today. Speculation is now centred on 2 or 3 July.

IN BRIEF

• **Gencor**, the South African mining giant, is planning a two-way split that could lead to a £5bn flotation of its base metals operations in London and a new FTSE100 constituent. The plans are understood to include a share sale to raise up to £1.2bn, one of the biggest equity issues in London and similar in size to the sale of Norwich Union shares later this month. Gencon's precious metals businesses would retain their Johannesburg base and listing.

• **Charterhouse Development Capital** has raised £800m towards a European Private Equity fund. As with Schroder Ventures, which last week announced a \$1bn European fund, much of the investment is from the US. Charterhouse was the first development capital firm in the UK, set up in 1934, and this is its sixth institutional private equity fund. It will invest in management buyouts and corporate restructurings in the UK and Western Europe.

• **The cost of reducing inflation** in terms of jobs and lost output would rise if the Bank of England followed international trends set by other independent central banks, according to a report published today by the Social Market Foundation, a think-tank. According to Robert Chote, the report's author, independent banks usually have to induce deeper recessions to meet their inflation targets than do those under direct political control.

• **The Chancellor** has been urged to extend tax exemption for workplace nurseries to all forms of registered childcare provision funded by an employer. The Campaign for Tax Relief and Childcare said tax exemption, introduced in 1990, had failed in its objective of improving the availability of childcare for working parents.

• **Friends of the Earth** will today urge the Government to promote renewable sources of energy when the domestic energy market is opened up to competition next year. The environmental pressure group will say electricity from renewable sources should be exempt from tax.

informative:

With effect from 2 June 1997, First Direct will offer the following interest rates:

High Interest Savings Account (with 20p 20 Day Account)				
Credit Interest	Gross % p.a.	Gross CAR	Net % p.a.	Net CAR
£1 to £2,499	3.50	3.56	2.80	2.83
£2,500 to £24,999	4.00	4.07	3.20	3.24
£25,000 and over	4.50	4.59	3.60	3.65

Direct Interest Savings Account (Monthly 60 Day Account)				
Credit Interest	Gross % p.a.	Gross CAR	Net % p.a.	Net CAR
£1 to £299	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.40
£1,000 to £2,499	3.75	3.80	3.00	3.03
£2,500 to £4,999	4.75	4.83	3.80	3.85
£5,000 to £24,999	5.65	5.77	4.52	4.59
£25,000 and over	6.00	6.13	4.90	4.98

Gross: the rate before the deduction of tax applicable to interest on savings.
Net: the rate after the deduction of tax applicable to interest on savings, currently 20%.

CAR: Compounded Annual Rate is the true gross/net return if the interest payments are retained in the account.

First Direct is a division of Midland Bank plc

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STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100

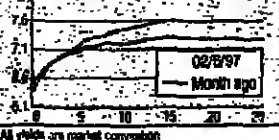
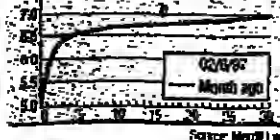
FTSE 100 World Index

Indices

Index	Close	Week's chg	Change(%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD02
FTSE 100	4821.30	-40.5	-0.9	4692.90	4066.50	3.54
FTSE 250	4495.80	-10.9	-0.2	4729.40	4499.40	3.63
FTSE 350	2240.80	-16.9	-0.7	2272.10	2012.90	3.56
FTSE SmallCap	2294.19	-5.6	-0.2	2374.20	2178.29	3.07
FTSE All-Share	2202.91	-15.8	-0.7	2230.98	1999.76	3.52
New York	7306.15	-39.8	-0.5	7383.41	5032.94	1.89
Tokyo	20068.81	+59.8	+0.3	20489.75	17303.85	0.81
Hong Kong	14757.81	+426.1	+3.0	14757.81	12052.17	2.99
Frankfurt	3547.84	-54.4	-1.5	3674.36	2848.77	1.50

Source: FT Information

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates					US interest rates				
Benchmarks yield curve (0.50 year gilt (%)					Benchmarks yield curve (0.50 year treasury (%)				
									
All yields are market convention					Factor: Month 1 week				
Money Market Rates			Bond Yields *						
Index	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Term (%)	Year Ago	Long Term (%)	Year Ago			
UK	5.41	6.97	7.22	8.17	7.28	8.26			
US	5.63	6.31	6.89	6.83	6.94	6.97			
Japan	0.53	0.81	2.54	3.20	-	-			
Germany	3.13	3.12	5.94	6.50	6.71	-			
*Basisline's indices									
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Rises - Top 3			Price up	Falls - Top 3			Price up	UK's Clay got it Wrong	
Telewest Comcasts	74.5	11.5	18.3	Vndm Lux Gp/SA	466.5		45	8.8	
Harr & Crossfield	121.5	13.5	12.5	Gem Cable	197		13	8.7	
Amersham Int'l	1392.5	17.0	8.6	87R	138.5		16.5	8.5	

news

Jack O'Sullivan meets a 15-year-old designer whose neo-classical shed has made it into the 'World of Interiors'

Narnia at the bottom of an English country garden

A shed is, of course, but a few sticks of wood, well-crooked. It can be a workshop, full of tools and paint. A store for mouldering deck chairs and a rusty lawnmower. A child's imaginary world. A sewing room, a place to meditate, an artist's studio, a home for that model railway, a refuge from the world, a study, even a place to sleep. But never before, surely, a neo-classical palace.

Yet, when you step, or more accurately stoop, inside Philip Cooper's shed, you feel like a character in a CS Lewis novel walking into the wardrobe and out into Narnia. One moment, you are among the rambling honeysuckle, rose hedges and mess of a suburban garden in Exeter. The next, you are in a tiny drawing-room of which Robert Adam would have been proud.

Dancing cherubs, moulded plaster work and gold panelling are set off by a cool Wedgwood blue background. Look up at the ceiling and Botticelli's *Primavera* gazes down, beside a chandelier that casts light on a frieze of Bacchic debauchery. Recalling the decadent opulence of *Dangerous Liaisons*, you can almost imagine John Malkovich and Glenn Close, like so many shed-seduced lovers, caught in *flagrant* among the bedding plants.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is discovering that the architect and master craftsman of this 'fairy-like world' (the shed measures 6ft by 5ft) is just 15.

Philip Cooper's peers prefer pop stars to plaster angels. They would rather ogle Pamela Anderson than enjoy a classical Venus. But that hasn't stopped him pouring as much energy into his shed (which he has had since he was five) as Jacques Gabriel devoted to Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon at the bottom of the Louis XVI's garden in Versailles.

The detail is exceptional, right down to the curtains, made from muslin, edged with trim and pyjama cords at the top, and decorated with crumpled up wire ribbon, set against a gold decorated pelmet.

His father, Peter, sculpted the capitals, which Philip then moulded with latex. Much of the plaster work is Philip's own. What he has bought in is inexpensive and might, in a different setting, be dismissed as tat - the chandelier from Argos, costing £14 raised from selling toys, the plaster niches from Wickes, the cherubs from the Christmas decoration counter in BHS, the Botticellis from Athena posters, the wall lights from a downmarket store in Exeter. But, placing them in the right context, he has created a diminutive stately home.

Philip's work has earned him a four-page spread in this month's *World of Interiors*, an extraordinary accolade from a magazine which is to DIY what *Capability Brown* was to garden centres. The feature on Philip's shed is sandwiched beside a piece extolling the beauties of The Charterhouse of Padua, a fabulous medieval Carthusian monastery.

"Philip is amazing," said Min Hogg, editor-in-chief at the *World of Interiors*. "I've never seen anything like it from a boy of that age or a girl. Children are given those horrible little Wendy houses with their awful Wendy furniture and curtains. He's made his own thing 20

times better." Philip is not, however, at first sight, a particularly extraordinary young man. He remains, after all, half-boy, his bedroom still with a box full of teddies half hidden behind a curtain. He wears Doc Martens, likes surly clothes and listens to indie grunge - Radiohead, the Manic Street Preachers, Garbage and the Cranberries.

But when he talks interiors you realise you are in the presence of a sophisticate. Why, I asked, is he so enamoured with classical style? "It's the drama of it," he said. "The plaster work, the draping curtains. There are nice curved lines, not necessarily symmetrical, but balanced. I love rococo, the leaping figures of clay on the ceiling all shouting at each other. It feels like there is movement in the room even though everything is still."

"Robert Adam is my favourite interior designer, the way he used complementary colours, like mint green and pale pink," he added as he reached under his bed for thick, colourful books to show me German examples of the styles he admires.

It's a hobby that wins little favour among the shaggier teedecy at school. "They say, 'Shut up, Philip, you're so sad. Shed boy,' they say, 'we're going to burn it down. You're so gay.' So, these days, I keep quiet about it. They ask me, 'Do you still do that gay little shed?' I say no. And they say, 'Why don't you burn it down. I just ignore them.'"

But he doesn't let his teenage critics get him down. Philip hangs out with his friend, Ruth Wilde, at the Picture House,

Exeter's arty cinema. "We don't like going around swearing and shouting saying we snogged so and so. We like going to art galleries. We're interested in poems, adult things."

So is Philip Cooper just an extraordinary one off? His parents' 1930s pebbledash home gives no sign of spawning a design guru.

Philip, in that great tradition of children letting you down in public, describes it: "Beige walls, original carpet, carelessly painted with the cheapest emulsion, the furniture neither nice nor nasty, just practical. They say, 'Philip, you'd better start on the house,' but when I say what I'd do, they can't afford it. They'd rather go on holiday to Venice."

His mother, Susan, who is studying for a history degree, struggles to find the source of her son's inspiration. Her maternal grandmother was a designer as was her father-in-law. Her husband paints, sculpts and is a photographer.

But then the crucial clue emerges from the family history. Sheds. This is a shed family, a home that has a thing about huts. Many of us have one of these little wooden structures lurking in our background. "I was in Uruguay," said Min Hogg, "where almost everyone lives in a shed, one more beautiful than the next." The Coopers have the shed-bug on an almost Uruguayan scale.

"I used to have a shed when I was a child," Mrs Cooper said. "I liked to make tea in there on a little methylated spirits stove. Being a woman, I had the idea of trying to work out what I

could cook on it. I had bits of china, which eventually ended up in my daughter's shed." That is Philip's sister, Elizabeth, 22, whose shed adjoins his, but which became filled with garden tools once she left home for university. As children they pretended they were running a global business, using pre-First World War Bakelite telephones with a taut wire running between their two sheds.

Philip's father has annexed the sister's shed and also has another - or rather the garage. "He locks it up and doesn't let anyone in," Mrs Cooper said. "He brings out his paintings, but we don't see the progress. He's a private person, who likes to get on without intrusion."

Philip, unlike his father, is clearly a member of the exhibitionist school of shed person. Like Tony Gohle from Roath, Cardiff, who complained about exhibits at the National Museum of Wales and was challenged to do better. So he lined up his favourite hammers, chisels and garden tools and displayed his shed to the public. Dozens turned up to view it.

Philip, likewise, has a steady stream of visitors constantly wishing to see his hut, an irritation sometimes because it makes redecoration difficult. And there is much to be done. Making a neo-classical palace out of a traditional, wooden slated shed creates problems that Robert Adam was spared.

"You have to battle with the elements," Philip said. "The wind and damp in the winter makes the wood rot, so you have to treat it in the spring. In the summer it gets too hot, so it cracks and you get wasps, spiders and wood lice and ants' nests under the carpet. You have to fill the gaps in with concrete every year so nothing can get in."

He nearly gave it all up for a new summerhouse, with lots of windows. And he is giving more attention to his bedroom, creating a more modern style. But he's staying faithful to his shed. "Some of my personality has been put into it. My flamboyance, all my pride. If it got blown down I would be devastated."

His advice to admirers? "Everyone should have a hobby. What else do you have to live for apart from your passions?"



Shed boy: Peter Cooper in the hut which he has painstakingly decorated in ornate style Photographs: Guy Newman

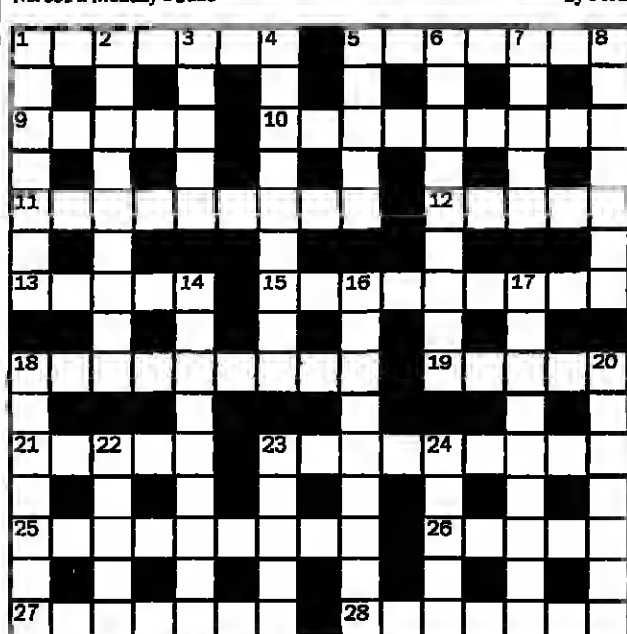


A different world: Peter guarding the entrance to the shed

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3314, Monday 2 June

By Portia



ACROSS
1 Take advantage of increase agreed (3,4)
5 Simple to get into pet show (7)
9 Endlessly showy individual becomes famous architect (5)
10 Unnatural roaring of French river (3,6)
11 A tense time lies ahead now (2,7)
12 Stream of children (5)
13 Health drink? (5)

15 Tips mine out containing a plant (9)
18 Unit's limited by artillery regulation (9)
19 Proportion come within Corporation Tax (5)
21 Caught in the front drive (5)
23 Chap with painting thought to be genuine (9)
25 Charm a number to invest in top London gallery (9)
26 A record broken by new forward (5)

27 Right, get soldiers on deck (7)
28 Finalise about a quarter are cheats (5,2)
DOWN
1 Prince means to hold a parade (7)
2 Valuable resource to have in hand? (5,4)
3 I pretend to possess sang-froid (5)
4 I warn one somehow about German national (9)
5 Upper class idiot's without influence (5)
6 Advocate way to penetrate defence (9)
7 Verbally extorts money from hands (5)
8 Thus see change in Greek hero (7)
14 Amateur entering arrangement of fruit (9)
16 Obtaining block that bounces a great many (9)
17 Between ourselves it's true one's mad about Pole (5,4)
18 Service run by person in authority (7)
20 Turned over company's label attached to figure (7)
22 Sudden attack involving political leader (5)
23 Excitement accompanies second of preliminary races (5)
24 Monarch's in riding gear of course (5)



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